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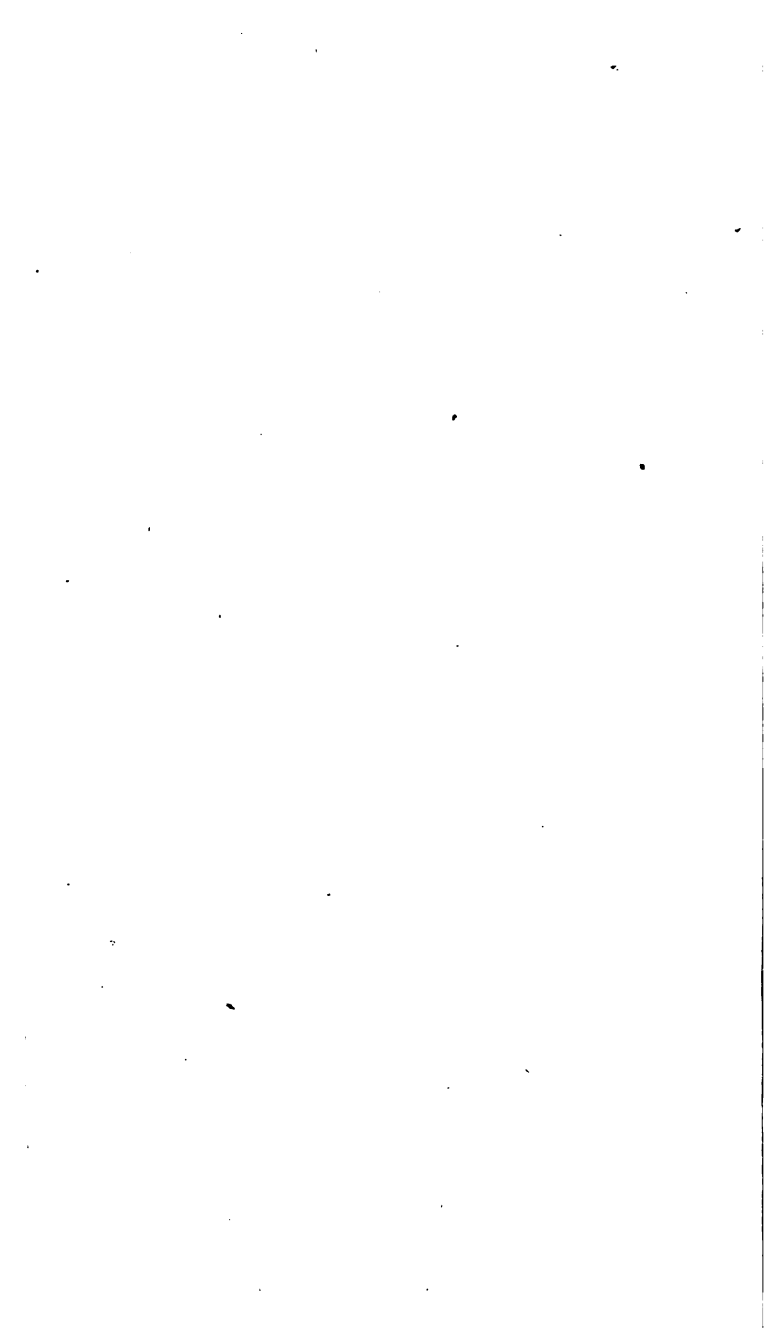
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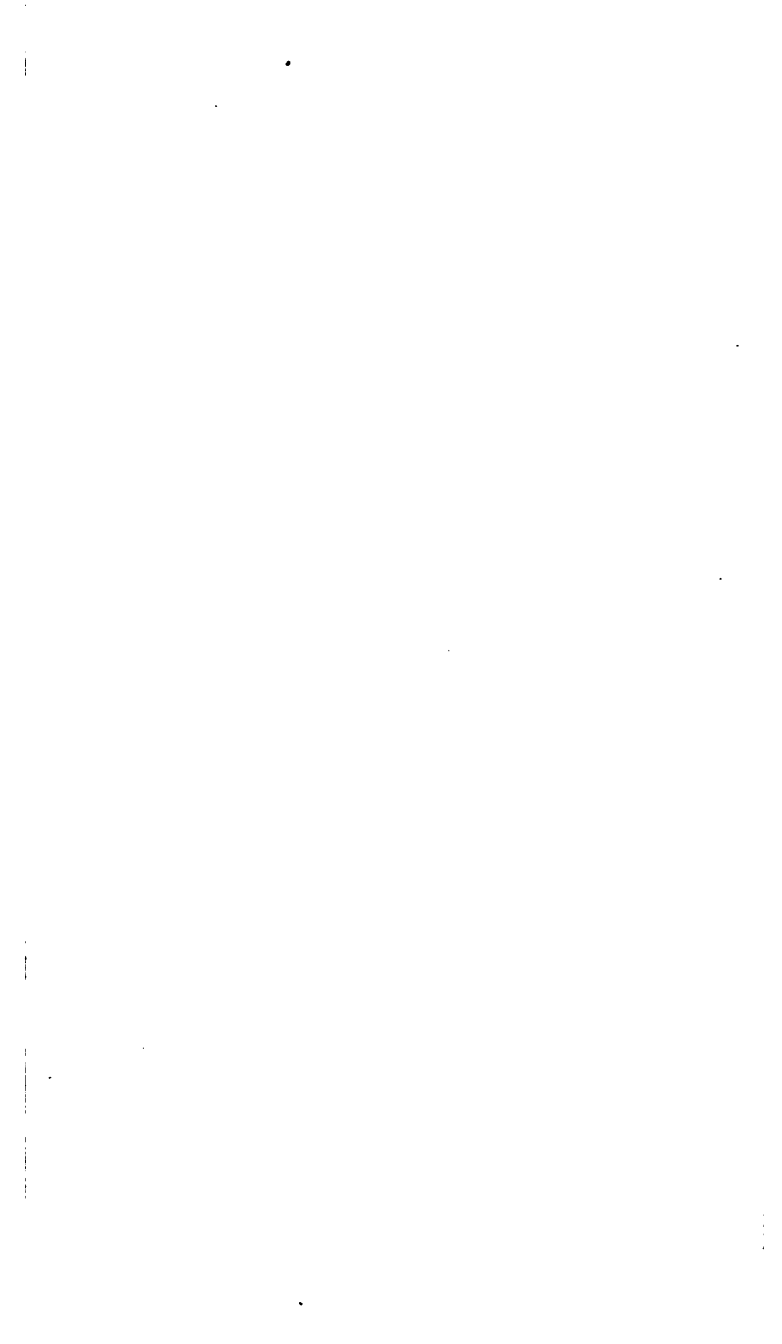
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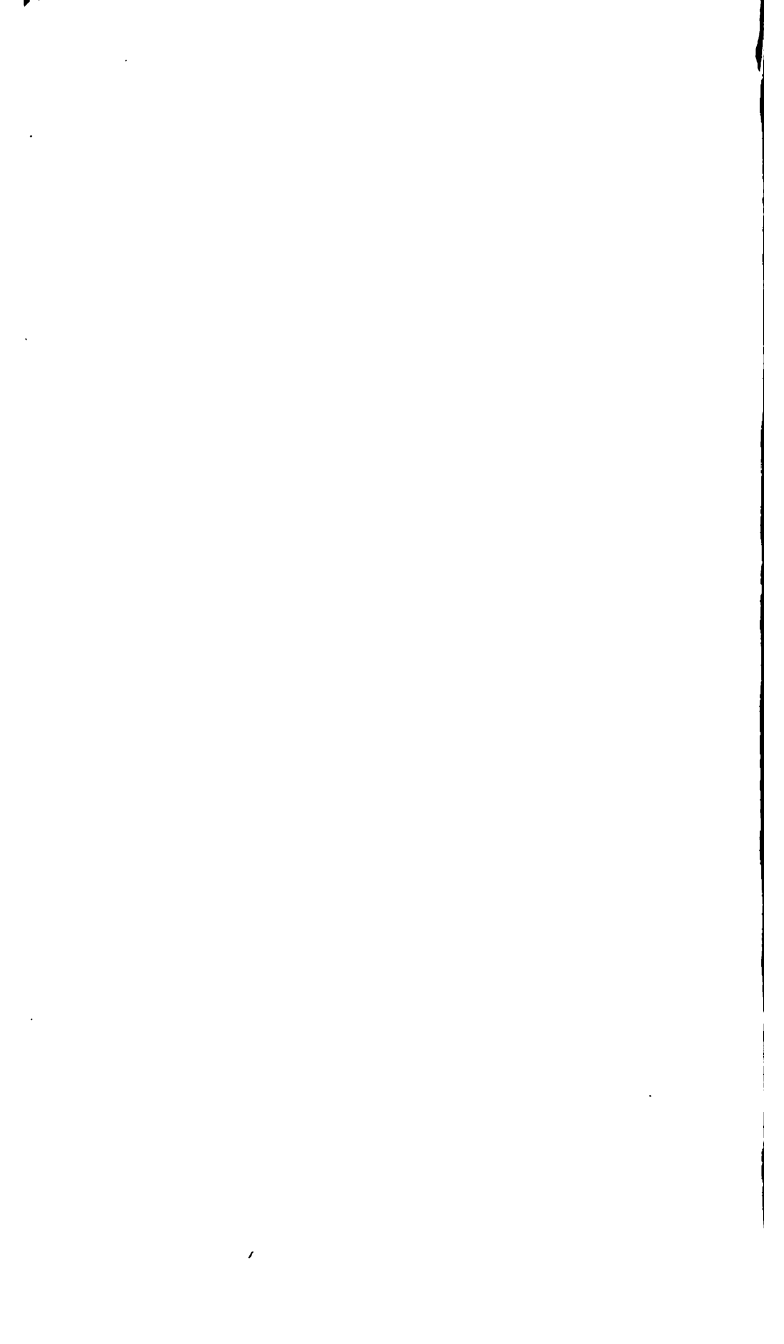


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AUTHOR OF

WIELAND, ORMOND, ARTHUR MERVYN,

&c. &c.

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STEPHEN CALVERT.

CHAPTER IV.

SUCH were the emotions which were excited in my heart by one whom I had never seen, and whose person and features I knew only by description. In this way did the lawless and wild enthusiasm of my character first display itself. I regarded my feelings with wonder and mortification. They reminded me—of what I had read in the old poets, of heroes who wept away their lives for love, though the object of their passion had never been seen, and sometimes did not exist. These pictures, which Cer-

vantes had taught me to ridicule or to disbelieve, I now regarded with altered eyes, and perceived that they were somewhat more than creatures of a crazed or perverse fancy.

On entering Wallace's parlour, my friend presented me to one whom he called my cousin. My confusion scarcely allowed me to receive her offered cheek, or to look at her. One glance, however, was sufficient to dissolve my dream, and quiet my emotion. I was restored, in a moment, to myself, and to indifference; and could scarcely persuade myself that this was the being whom my fancy had so luxuriantly and vividly pourtrayed.

She was diminutive in size, and without well-turned, or well-adjusted members or features. Her face was moulded with some delicacy, but it was scarred by the small-pox; and the defects of her skin, in smoothness, were not compensated by any lustre of complexion. Minute in size, inelegantly proportioned,

dun in complexion, this figure was a contrast to what the vague encomiums of my friends, and my own active imagination, had taught me expect.

This disappointment created dejection, and even some degree of peevishness. I was absurdly disposed to quarrel with my friends for exciting, by their exaggerations, fallacious hopes; and not to have fulfilled these hopes, I regarded as a crime in my cousin. On this account, I not only despised, but secretly upbraided her. Reflection speedily cured me of this folly; and intercourse with the newcomer, by gradually unfolding her excellencies, fully reconciled me to her personal defects, or made me wholly overlook them.

This intercourse was without constraint, and almost without intermission. I saw her at all hours, and almost during every hour of the day. At home and abroad, in the company of strangers and friends, at times of recreation and em-

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ployment, her person and behaviour were exposed to my scrutiny ; a temper capricious or uneven, timorous or irritable, impatient of delay or contradiction, and preferring her own gratification to that of others, never, at any moment, appeared. She smiled upon all, sought from every one the knowledge which he possessed, and betrayed solicitude to please and instruct her companion in her turn. Her mind was incessantly active in analyzing the object or topic that occurred ; in weighing proofs, tracing inferences, and correcting her mistakes. She read much, but she talked more than she read, and meditated more than she talked. She frequently changed her place, her company, and her employments ; but these changes wrought no difference in the ineffable complacency which dwelt in her eyes, in the activity of her thoughts, and the benevolent fervour of her expressions.

Me she admitted, in a moment, to fa-

miliarity and confidence. She talked to me of her own concerns, of her maxims of economy, her household arrangements, her social connexions, her theories of virtue and duty ; and related, with scrupulous fidelity, the history of her opinions and her friendships. This confidence did not flow from having ascertained my merits, or the assurance slowly and cautiously admitted, that her confessions would not be misunderstood, and would not be abused. She spake to me because I was within hearing, and only ceased to speak when interrupted by another, or to obtain replies to her questions. She was not more liberal of information respecting herself, than solicitous to obtain a knowledge of me. For this end she dealt not in circuities and hints, but employed direct questions, and inquired into my condition and views, with all the openness and warmth with which she disclosed her own.

The thoughts which had occupied me

most, related to herself. My design of gaining her love had been thwarted, or, at least, discouraged by first appearances. The transfer of her father's property, had been recommended by a sense of justice, but I will not deny that I was also influenced by other motives. These motives had governed me without my being fully conscious of their force. I had desired, by bestowing this benefit, to advance myself in her esteem; and I could scarcely conceal from myself that marriage would restore to me what I should thus have given away.

My feelings were now changed, and I found reasons for abandoning my purpose, or, at least, for delaying the execution of it. What I did not mean to perform, there seemed some reason for concealing that I had ever intended. Though she frequently alluded to the event which had made me possessor of her father's property, interrogated me as to the condition of the land, and ten-

dered me her counsel and assistance in the use of it, she never gave proofs of being dissatisfied or disappointed by her father's will ; of having imagined her own title superior to mine ; or of imputing any meanness or guilt to my retention of the estate.

What her candour did not condemn, however, my own conscience disapproved. It was difficult to stifle my conviction of being actuated by selfish and ignoble views. I saw that I had formed this design upon improper motives, and had relinquished it from motives equally sordid. I had not only my own disapprobation to contend with, but was terrified by fear of that of others. I had incautiously mentioned this design to my mother and to Wallace, and it would not be easy to account for, or apologize to them for this change in my plans. Still, however, my reluctance to give away so large a property to one, who, by her mar-

riage, would give it to another, was too powerful to be subdued.

While my mind was in this state of indecision, I took occasion to visit my cousin one evening, on which she was alone. I had scarcely entered the apartment when I noticed some marks of disquiet in her features, which she immediately explained, by repeating the substance of a conversation which had just passed between Sydney and her. From him she had heard of the design I had formerly entertained respecting *Calverton*. "I have just been informed," she continued, "that you intended to transfer my father's estate to me. Your motives, no doubt, were generous, and founded on a high opinion of my worth. You have not executed this design, nor since my arrival, have even mentioned it to my friend or to me. I cannot help feeling some anxiety on this account. If I had not received your earnest assurances that

your prepossessions in my favour have been fulfilled, and even greatly surpassed, I should ascribe this change in your plans, to the discovery of some unworthiness in me. This belief I cannot admit, after having listened to so many encomiums from your lips, and yet I am at a loss to account for it in any other manner. A sort of half-formed suspicion has found its way into my heart, that— Shall I tell you what I think, even when my thoughts are disadvantageous to you? I cannot help suspecting you of some caprice, or some faultiness. I have hitherto found you, or imagined you, an excellent youth; I loved, I exulted in your virtues, such as I have known them, by means of your mother's report, and such as I have witnessed them myself. To have formed this design, argued more generosity than I had ascribed to you; but to have relinquished it when once formed, evinces either a blameable fickleness or a laudable sagacity. From which

of these it flows, I know not. I want to esteem you more than I do, but I am afraid, when I come to be acquainted with the true motives on which you have acted, I shall find reason for esteeming you less. Pray, my friend, let me know the truth."

While saying this her eyes were fixed with great earnestness on my face. They even glistened with tears. I was affected in a singular manner. These proofs of a tender and sublime interest in my happiness and virtue, affected me with pleasure ; while the consciousness of the truth of her suspicions covered me with shame.

I had a difficult part to act. To acknowledge the truth, would, indeed, lower me in her opinion ; a circumstance not less distressful to her than to me. To pretend that I was influenced by disinterested considerations, and by a sort of refined, though perhaps erroneous regard to her happiness, which her present

frugal competence would more essentially promote than the possession of extensive and cumbrous property ; to insinuate that I had only delayed, in consequence of some fictitious obstacles, the execution of my purpose, would have been grossly culpable. I was fortunately extricated from this embarrassment by the entrance of a neighbour, whose prolix loquacity consumed the whole evening, and allowed me to withdraw before any further explanation could take place.

This incident led my thoughts into a new direction. It seemed as if the option of doing or forbearing was taken away. My reputation was made to depend upon my conduct : and the rebukes and contempts of my mother, of Sidney, and of the lady herself, were to be shunned at a greater price than this. I was determined, with whatever reluctance, to execute my first purpose.

My reluctance did not flow from any single source. Power and property are

intrinsically valuable, and I loved them for their own sake, as well as for the sake of the good which they would enable me to confer upon others. I was willing to obviate all the necessities of this woman, but desired to retain the means in my own hands. I did not love her, but I drew pain from thinking of her as belonging to another. I did not wish her to be mine, but I believed that no human being was so worthy to possess her as myself. To enrich her, would be merely enriching some being, who, at present, was unknown; and whom, when known, I was sure that I should hate and despise.

The necessity to which I had reduced myself of giving, and the aversion which the conception of her marriage with another produced, led me, at length, to reflect upon the scheme of seeking her myself. To reconcile myself to this scheme, I ruminated on her unrivalled and inestimable qualities. I said, I must

not expect to meet with any one equally excellent. She is destitute of beauty ; but what is beauty ; it is transient and perishable. Time or indisposition destroys it, and its power over the senses depends upon its novelty. Conjugal familiarity never fails, in a very short period, to dissolve the charm. The true foundation of love is placed in the moral character, and the assurance of being requited with affection. To know that I am beloved by a being like this, will unavoidably excite that passion in me ; but, if it did not, still my regard for the happiness of such a woman ought to determine my choice. I believe that she already loves me, and it is my duty to ascertain the truth ; and, in some sort, to abide by her decision.

Meanwhile to offer her this estate, which truly belongs not to me, but to her, is my first province. In doing this, all allusions to wedlock or love should be carefully excluded. They may, in a due in-

terval, properly succeed, but ought not to accompany the offer. To proffer money and love in the same moment is ridiculous. It would appear like bribing her affections ; and is absurd, since it would be equivalent to taking back with one hand what we bestow with the other.

But how shall I account for my delay? She knows that I once conceived this design, and have since apparently relinquished it. My motives have, I fear, been selfish or ambiguous, and I cannot prevail upon myself to disclose them. The truth must be palliated or disguised. Some adequate apology must be invented. It was in vain, however, that I sought for some apology which would answer my end, without a greater breach of truth than my honesty would allow me to commit.

At length it occurred to me, that since I had resolved to tender her my hand, there was no sufficient reason for deferring the tender. I neither expected

nor desired stronger evidence of her intellectual excellence than I at present possessed. If she loved me, the sooner her anxieties were at an end the more should I consult her happiness. If her affection were desirable, upon the whole, the sooner it was ascertained and secured the better. Besides, since an apology for my delay must be found, none was more plausible than that it arose from my having entertained a passion which, if crowned with success, would render my intended gift unnecessary and absurd.

Such was the train of my reflections, in my way homeward from the interview which I have just described. When I left the house, no conception was more distant from my wishes than marriage with my cousin; but before I reached my lodging, a total reverse had taken place in my sentiments and views. This reverse was of too much moment not to engross my deepest thoughts. I entered my chamber and threw myself on the

bed. As soon as I came to reflect on this union as on somewhat that was destined to happen, I was industrious in tracing its consequences and revolving its benefits. Insensibly my fancy became heated, I grew impatient of delay ; I shuddered at the obstacles to my success that time might produce, and at those which might, at that moment, secretly exist. I endeavoured to bury my forebodings and anxieties in sleep, but sleep would not be summoned.

At length I started on my feet, and exclaimed : Why should I endure this uncertainty for a moment ? Why should I impose it on another ? A mutual understanding may be accomplished next month or next week ; but cannot it be, with more propriety, effected to-morrow ? and if to-morrow, why not to-night ? No event can be more disastrous and intolerable than suspense ; and this hour, when the Wallaces are gone to their repose, and Louisa has withdrawn to her

chamber, not to sleep, but to brood over the tormenting images of my depravity, may terminate suspense, and stifle suspicion, and overwhelm the heart of this angelic woman with joy.

She does not go to bed till twelve. In such a moonlight night as this, she is probably seated at her chamber window, which is lifted, and which overlooks the street. Hence, it will be easy to obtain audience: and the conference to which I summon her will be worthy of the sacred silence and solemnity attending on it.

Fraught with this idea, I left my chamber and the house, and speeded towards the street where Wallace resided. The air was mild and the moonlight brilliant, and many persons were seated at their doors and in their porches, gaily conversing, and inhaling the breeze, whose grateful influence had been enhanced by the fervours of the past day.

My expectations of seeing Louisa at

the window were fulfilled. Her voice was coarse and monotonous, and wholly unadapted to music ; but she was, nevertheless, fond of the art, and, when alone, was accustomed to sing. This, at present, was her occupation, and though its influence was displeasing, inasmuch as it reminded me of her deficiency in an art, upon skill in which my imagination had been used to set the highest value, it likewise delighted me by denoting her presence at the window.

On recognising my voice she betrayed no small surprise. My request to be admitted to an interview was immediately granted. She came down stairs, and, opening the street door, went with me into a back parlour. "This meeting," said she, "is very singular and unexpected. Something of no very trivial import must have induced you to come hither at such an hour. Pry'thee tell me the cause."

To explain the cause was a task of

some delicacy. Her own quickness of perception, however, supplied my want of perspicuity ; and the ardour of her own feelings made her overlook the fluctuations and coldness which the neutral state of my affections could not but produce in my tone and deportment. That she loved me was a suspicion not admitted without plausible evidence ; but the transports of her tenderness, the sobs which convulsed her bosom, and took away all utterance, surpassed those bounds which my imagination had assigned to it.

These appearances were not anticipated. It cannot be said that they excited pain, but they were contemplated without rapture. I was conscious to a kind of disapprobation, of which the inertness and insensibility of my own heart were the objects. I believed that I ought to have partaken in her transports ; that the merits of this being, and the value of her love, were such as to make my near ap-

proaches to indifference a crime. In circumstances that ought to have been pregnant with delight, my complex feelings were tinctured with dejection.

At this moment our attention was called away by a distant and faint sound. It was the murmur of confused and unequal voices, mingling, and, at each moment, growing louder and more distinct. Presently a tolling bell was heard. The sounds were, at first, slow, and at long intervals; but suddenly the strokes succeeded each other with more rapidity, and other larums were rung in different quarters. The sounds gradually approached the door. The pavement without was beaten by innumerable footsteps, and the fearful warning, ascending from a thousand mouths, was "Fire! Fire!"

I was confounded and dismayed by this uproar. I had never witnessed this disaster in a populous city, and my fancy had connected with it innumerable images of tumult and horror. I knew not the

place or the limits of the danger, and gazed around me as if it were uncertain whether the room in which we stood was encircled by the blaze.

From this stupor I was roused by my companion, who knew nothing but compassion for the sufferers, and who implored me to fly to their relief.

“Who? Where? Whither must I fly?”

“Go into the street : run whichever way the crowd runs.”

I obeyed without parley or delay ; and, rushing into the street, allowed myself to be carried along by the stream. Presently I turned a corner, and saw, far before me, red gleams, wavering on the roofs and walls, and luminous smoke rolling in immense volumes above.

I ran forward with speed. Presently I drew near the house that was in flames. The space before it was crowded with gazers, whose tongues were active in augmenting the clamour, while their hands

seemed totally unoccupied. I pressed forward with eagerness, though actuated merely by an impetuous curiosity, till I reached a narrow interval between the walls of the building and the middle of the street. This space was ankle deep in water, supplied by the pumps and engines, which had been drained without success. It was, besides, scarcely tenable from the heat. Beams, and fragments from the roof were incessantly falling around it. No danger, therefore, could be more imminent; and the crowd accordingly kept aloof.

I had scarcely breathed, after reaching the verge of this space, when I noticed a ladder, raised against the wall, and leaning on a window at the third story. No one ascended it; from fear, as I hastily collected from the exclamations of those near me, that the roof would sink before he who should be adventurous enough to enter the house would have time to leave it. I found, likewise, that some

one was imagined to be asleep in that chamber.

I was not qualified to judge of the progress which the fire had made, or on what ground this apprehension was built. Had I deliberately consulted my reason, I should, doubtless, have continued to hover at a cowardly distance from the scene of peril ; but the impulse that governed me was headlong and irresistible: it pushed me forward, and I began to mount the ladder. In vain a thousand voices called upon me to come down, and exclaimed that the roof was already falling. I was deaf to their clamours ; and, having gained the top, dashed through the window, which, on the outside, could not have been lifted easily, or with sufficient expedition.

The apartment was nearly filled with smoke, which, by my being suddenly immersed in it, had almost stifled me. Nothing was distinctly visible ; but, stretch-

ing forth my hands, I threw myself forward at random. I reached a bed, and laid my hands upon a sleeper. It was wonderful that the uproar of men, and the crackling of flames, had not awakened her. I had almost dragged her from the bed before she opened her eyes, and became sensible of her situation.

I had no need of words to explain her danger, or of arguments to prevail on her to fly with me. She had only to regain possession of her senses, to look around her and to listen. The stair-case and the roof were wrapt in flames. The fire had already taken hold of her chamber door. The lingering of a moment would have been fatal both to her and to me. Snatching her up in both arms, I hurried to the window, and, darting out of it, had nearly reached the bottom of the ladder when the roof fell in. A cloud of sparkles and cinders flew upward, and on every side. The concussion shook

the ladder from its place. I fell, but was fortunate enough to reach the ground upon my feet.

By this time the strength of my companion was exhausted, and she fainted. I did not perceive her situation till, having dragged her through the crowd, who opened me a passage, I reached the steps of an opposite house. Here I paused to collect my thoughts and examine the state of my companion.

We were immediately surrounded by several persons, who offered their assistance. One of them, pointing to a house at some distance, and which was not likely to be injured by the fire, desired that the woman might be carried thither. At the same time he applied to a bystander, who, as it appeared, lived in the house, at the door of which we were seated, for a blanket or cloak, in which we might wrap the naked limbs of the sufferer. A cloak was instantly furnished,

and the woman, still insensible, was carried in the arms of several persons, to the house before pointed out.

During these transactions, I was nearly passive. An asylum being thus provided for this woman, and succour being thus amply and readily bestowed by others, there was need of no new exertion from me. I had done my part, and it now behoved me to attend to my own safety. Coals and cinders had lighted on my clothes, and penetrated, in several places, to my flesh. The pain, hence produced, was acute. I had likewise, in my incautious haste to regain the ladder, after having entered the room, struck my head against the side of the window with such violence, as appeared to have left no slight contusion behind it. I felt myself, however, able to move, and believed it proper to return home with as much expedition as possible. I quickly extricated myself from the crowd, whose curiosity and solicitude

were more engaged by the woman's condition than by mine, and stopped not till I reached my chamber.

On examining my wounds, I found them to be of small moment ; and to be such as to stand in no need of nurse or physician. The pain could be allayed by simple applications within my reach, and I forbore to disturb any of the family. Being remote from the danger, it had not interrupted their repose, and they were wholly unconscious of my motions.

After some time, the tumult of my spirits subsided, and I had leisure to reflect upon the extraordinary occurrences that had just happened. They appeared more like the transitions of a feverish vision, than the sober changes of reality. ✓ The being whom I had saved from destruction was a woman. This I had been able to infer, not only from a rapid view of her face and person, but also from her shrieks, which in acute tones sufficiently noted her sex. Closed eyes and the

wanness of death, were not all that the pale reflection of the flames enabled me to discover during the few moments in which she lay in my arms. There were features, and neck, and bosom, which were stamp'd upon my memory and fancy, in eternal characters. Though seen for an instant, they refused to disappear, and the image was so vivid that I almost stretched forth my hand to discover whether it was not really before me.

What were the lines and hues of this image? Did they coincide with those delineations of ideal beauty by which my solitary hours had been occupied? They were different from all that I had imagined or witnessed. They burst upon my senses with all the enchantments attendant upon novelty as well as loveliness.

But though I had seen her so nearly, she was probably profoundly ignorant of me. Involved in darkness and smoke,

she saw me not in her chamber ; and, before she reached a station where my features could have been distinctly noticed, she was sunk into insensibility. Some of those around me might have had previous acquaintance with my person, but it was more probable that I was totally unknown to the nearest spectators, I had lately arrived in the city, and my intercourse was chiefly limited to Sidney and the Wallaces.

I scarcely know how to convey to you just ideas of so motley a character as mine was, in my juvenile days. I was the slave of phantasies and contradictions. My preceptors were books. These were of such a kind as to make me wise in speculation, but absurd in practice. ✓ I had blended the illusions of poetry with the essences of science. My mind was fertile in reasoning and invention, and my theory was not incorrect ; but my practical notions of happiness and dignity ✓ were full of imbecility and folly. The

idol which my heart secretly worshipped, and to which I habitually annexed every excellent and splendid attribute, was love. I snatched glimpses of a better kind of devotion, than which is paid to science, to ambition, to the happiness of mankind ; but these were transient in their influence.

According to my custom, I was now busy in tracing the consequences to which this incident might lead : in reflecting on the emotions which the lady, on recovering from her swoon, and obtaining a knowledge of the means of her rescue, might admit into her bosom ; and on the effects which an interview between us was likely to produce.

The pleasure which I found in these reveries, was quickly damped by remembering that sacred engagement into which I had entered with my cousin, and on the importance to her happiness of my adherence to that engagement. I likewise thought upon those obstacles which

fortune, or parents, or a previous marriage, might raise between me and this new acquaintance. These thoughts made my soul droop. I began to upbraid my precipitation with regard to my cousin; to consider my proffer of love before it was actually felt, as a criminal imposture, no less injurious to myself than unjust to her.

The mind is ingenious in inventing topics of consolation. Gradually my thoughts returned to the contemplation of my cousin's excellence, of the infrequency of any union between personal and mental beauty, and of the preference which the latter might always claim over the former. I was likewise wise enough to discern the danger that would flow from intercourse with this unknown person: the tenderness of gratitude for so signal a benefit, to produce a more fervent passion, and the hazard of yielding to temptation, which my unfortified virtue might incur. For these reasons I deter-

mined to decline all intercourse with this female, and to foster, by every means, that affection for Louisa to which she was so well entitled.

Next day the topics of general conversations were, of course, connected with the late fire. Wallace had been roused by the alarm, but had arrived upon the spot some time after I had retired from it. His inquiries had made him acquainted with most of the particulars which have just been mentioned, but no clue had been afforded by which to ascertain the person of him who had exposed his life to so imminent a hazard.

Sidney had likewise been upon the spot. His knowledge was equally imperfect. I withheld the knowledge which I possessed, being much amused with the speculations and comments that were made in my hearing. I could not but remark the numberless deviations from truth which the story exhibited in passing from one mouth to another. A score of

eye-witnesses communicated each a different tale, and different description of my person. I was sometimes a youth, sometimes middle-aged. To no two observers was my garb precisely of the same colour and form; and one person solemnly maintained, on the evidence of a pair of eyes, whose acuteness had, in this instance, been assisted by spectacles, that I was a negro man, about forty, who was formerly a slave of his own, and whom he had sought out and handsomely rewarded for his courage. It must be added, that this witness had not acquired much reputation for veracity.

I was much more inquisitive as to the character and condition of the family which occupied this mansion. I was told that it consisted of two old ladies and a female servant. The latter it was whom I had rescued from destruction. Her mistresses had seasonably escaped, and their confusion and terror had made them overlook, for some time, the danger

of their waiting maid. This being at length recollected, some persons had gone so far as to raise the ladder to the window, but their fears would not suffer them to mount it. There were some who confidently reported that the rescuer of the girl, was no other than her lover, a journeyman carpenter and a well-disposed youth, who merited, on this occasion, a public recompense.

So! the nymph whom my imagination had deified, and whose presence I was to shun with as much care as Ulysses shut his ears against the song of the Syrens, proved to be nothing more than a waiting maid, who, though not an unsightly girl, was affirmed to be illiterate and coarse in manners and sentiments. I was sufficiently disposed to question the truth of this intelligence; but these facts were not equally liable to misrepresentation and mistake, as those which related to me; and were supported by no unplausible evidence.

The flitting and ambiguous light in which she had been viewed, and her state of insensibility, had probably decorated her, to my eye, with so many fictitious charms. I drew a useful lesson from this discovery. I learned to condemn the vagaries of my fancy, and to place more reliance on experience. My secret struggles and fantastic regrets, which my reason had been unable to subdue, were now at an end. The idol I had worshipped proved to be a worthless stock; and I returned, with satisfaction, to the path of love and of honour to which my cousin had invited me.

Some days after, on entering Sidney's apartment, he pointed out a paragraph, in the gazette of the day, in which were these words: "We learn that the person who so bravely exposed his life for the sake of a fellow creature, at the late fire in High-street, is Mr. Felix Calvert, a young gentleman lately from Europe." This paragraph put an end to my con-

cealment ; and my narrative of this transaction afforded to Louisa and my friends a topic of much curiosity and congratulation. The assertion of my late arrival from Europe was a new proof of the fallacy of rumour ; and I took no pains either to confute this error, or to detect the means by which my concern in this affair had been discovered.

Sometime afterwards I was accidentally enabled to trace the channel through which this information reached the printer. A young negro, who belonged to Calverton, had spent the night of this conflagration abroad. He had excused his absence to my steward, by feigning that he watched by the side of a sick slave, belonging to a neighbouring plantation. In truth, he spent it at a carousal in the city.

Three days after this event, he was standing in the market-place, chattering with great vivacity to a companion. Their discourse was overheard by an apprentice in the office of the Weekly

Gazette, who stopped near them to purchase a melon. It appeared that Cuff was relating what had passed at the fire, of which he was a witness. When he reached the incident of mounting the ladder, he continued thus: -

“Ou’ pop a man! uppa de latha like a rat. Ob bobbs! what de debble! Prime, says I, is’n da massa Cavut? No!—Ees! ees! it ee massa Cavut. What de debble if ee see me? then Ceesa gim me floggin! Way! scampa! scud!”

“No, no, says Prime: top; he be kill. Run uppa de latha. Massa Cavut sure enough.”

“So I top. Ebba body olla, downa, downa! Massa Cavut no ere em: run uppa lika querril up oaka tree. No debble runna like im. In ee pop. No liffa de winda, but in ee pop, trough glass and all. Quash! ebba body olla. Prime olla. Me olla mo dan ebba body. O massa Cavut! massa Cavut! massa

CHAPTER V.

THERE is but one goal to which the wishes of lovers point. Having ascertained the mutual existence of love, and no impediment arising from consideration of fortune, all that remained was marriage. . When I had proceeded thus far, I was eager to accomplish the remainder ; and a suitable opportunity occurring, I disclosed to her my wishes.

Either the vulgar portraits of women are groundless and absurd, or my cousin's deportment was an exception to those rules which ordinarily influence her sex. I am disposed to adopt the former opinion, having rarely found any of those distinctions that abound in books exem-

plified in real life. Woman has been painted as a mass of scruples and doubts; as studying concealments and disguises; as inviting and withdrawing from importunities; as perpetually distrusting the tendency of her feelings, and sifting the professions of her lover; as wishing, and deferring the attainment of her wishes when fully in her power; as practising a thousand stratagems and frauds, and cloaking her hypocrisy under the specious names of dignity; self-respect; modest reserve.

We are taught to expect that a woman will assiduously counterfeit indifference till the man has avowed his affection; that the secret of her heart, instead of spontaneously flowing to her lips, can only be extorted; that tremors, flutterings, and misgivings; a proneness to recede and delay, are to accompany every act of condescension, and every acquiescence in necessity; that these are feminine attributes, and are not only dic-

tated by reason and duty, but are inter-
✓ woven with the female constitution.

My teachers and guides had been the
coiners of fiction ; the preachers of du-
plicity ; the moralists who talk of virtue
as of one thing in man and another thing
in woman ; of mind as modified by sex-
✓ ual differences, like the hue of a skin and
the texture of a muscle ; and of duty
and decorum as prescribing an opposite
demeanour in similar circumstances.

Hitherto my theories had been only
thwarted and contradicted by the con-
duct of my cousin. Love had made no
inroad on her candour and her unreserve.
Her preference of my society, even be-
fore she had reason to suppose me a lover,
was never concealed. Her eyes sparkled
with new pleasure on my entrance : her
attention seldom strayed from my counte-
nance and words : her anxiety at any to-
ken of disquiet in me was openly express-
ed ; and once, on a sudden meeting, she
so far overstept the customary bounda-

ries, as to wrap me in her arms and kiss my cheek. No self-reproof or blushful consciousness ensued this act of unguarded tenderness, though, indeed, it took place without a witness.

Knowing the benevolence of her temper, her perfect artlessness, and her assurance of her own rectitude, I was doubtful for a time whether to ascribe these appearances to more than friendship. I imagined that love was the parent of reserve and dissimulation; that it would produce a seeming unwillingness to answer my inquiries or comment upon my theories; that she should desire my exclusive company, but labour to conceal that desire, and so manage, that the attainment of her purpose should always appear to flow from accident; that her expressions, when addressed to others, should be fluent and unstudied, but, to me, should be selected with caution, and uttered with some degree of hesitation;

attention, when least apparent, should be most powerful, and when she listened with most eagerness, her eyes should seem most occupied by a different object.

On this occasion my vague prognostics were no less totally confuted. My intimations were understood before they were fully expressed. They obtained not a dubious acquiescence, but a vehement assent. It was unwise to defraud herself of the happiness of wedlock by the least delay. Next week was a period preferable to next month ; to-morrow was still more to be desired. Nay, she would eagerly concur in the ratification of this contract on that very night. Domestic arrangements might follow with as much convenience and propriety as precede. The house of Wallace would be glad to receive me as a more permanent guest.

She hated the ostentation and formalities attendant on the rite of marriage. These made her regard, with some timi-

dity, that which, on its own account, was productive of nothing but good. Why not lay these aside with the contempt which they deserved? Why tolerate a longer delay, or pass through more forms than were absolutely indispensable?

Her good friend, Mr. Aylford, knew of the engagement of her heart. She owed a visit to that reverend and excellent man. "Let us begone this moment," she continued; "and seek him in his closet, where he is busy in preparing the religious exercises of to-morrow. Let us claim his immediate assistance in uniting us beyond the power of fate to dissolve the union. We need not leave his house till to-morrow, when we will return hither, and afford you the opportunity of introducing the Wallaces to your wife."

I was almost startled by the abruptness and novelty of this proposal. Its adventurous singularity, however, was congenial with my character, and I eagerly assented to it. But where, said I, shall a

C

witness be procured : Mr. Aylford will not be willing to dispense with the presence of another.

“ Neither would I be willing. A witness must, doubtless, be had, and that witness shall be Sidney. His approbation and his presence are wholly indispensable on an occasion like this.”

At this moment Sidney entered the room. The lady, with her usual confidence in his affection, repeated the proposal which she had just made.

While thus employed I diligently observed the countenance of Sidney. I had never forgotten that he was once the lover of this woman. It was inconceivable that love so rational should have wholly disappeared. That Sidney, whose talents and integrity were revered by Louisa, should never have gained a place in her affections, had always appeared an inexplicable problem in my eyes ; but it was still more difficult to comprehend how the love which Sidney had once admitted

could have ceased to exist, when the intercourse between them, and the interchange of good offices, continued the same, and when no new passion had arisen to supplant the old.

I had seen, in him, however, no tokens of uneasiness or jealousy. He had marked the progress of our mutual passion with tranquil approbation. He had spoken of it with an air of serene contentment; and his frankness and affectionate demeanour, as well as his general cheerfulness, appeared not to have been lessened, but augmented by this event.

On the present occasion, he smiled, and said, "I believe your wishes cannot be gratified to night, unless some other clergyman will answer your purpose as well as Mr. Aylford, for he left town this morning, and will not return till to-morrow evening."

Louisa declared it impossible for any other to supply his place, and professed her willingness to defer the cere-

mony till the morrow. "On the whole," said she, "it will be best. Mrs. Wallace would censure me, with justice, for taking so momentous a step, not only without her company, but without her knowledge. You, Sidney, and she, shall accompany us to-morrow to Mr. Aylford's, and be witnesses of the happiness of your friends."

Some incident now occurred to separate the company, and put an end to our discourse. I returned to my lodgings, and, till the next morning allowed me to visit my cousin, passed a wakeful and feverish interval. The coming event I regarded with tumultuous impatience. So far from being able to sleep, it was impossible to enjoy a moment's rest. My limbs bore me mechanically to and fro. I marked the vibrations of the pendulum, and eyed the index of the clock as it stepped from one second to another. Time, surely, has no measure but the progress of our own sensations. Fear

and hope will prolong days into years, while the oblivion of insanity or sleep leaps over days and years as if they were not.

Every moment seemed to annihilate some hazard that beset me, while, for one peril that it removed, several were created anew. As I approached the period that should accomplish my felicity, my terrors were augmented. While fettered by these panics, I seemed conscious of the folly of my bondage ; that it existed only in my own imagination ; that my eyes were deceived by mists which a single penetrating and vigorous glance would utterly dispel. Still the effort could not be made or could not be sustained. If the mist vanished for a moment, it returned the next moment, harder to dispel, and more pregnant with monsters and chimeras than before.

The sun consoled me, at length, and encouraged me by his presence. Earlier than usual I hastened to Wallace's house.

All the disasters that are incident to man had infested my nocturnal reveries. A thousand evils impended over my cousin, any one of which was sufficient to raise an insuperable barrier between us. Fire might lurk in the walls or floors of her dwelling; it might burst forth in the midst of her security, as on the occasion formerly mentioned. Danger might assail her from within. At this moment she might be seized with the pangs of a mortal disease, and death might snatch her from my arms.

Short-sighted wretch! The evil which thou dreadedst was that which was to take this woman from thy possession. Whence but from some casualty or some disease, could this evil flow? That any moral impediment could arise, never occurred to thy conceptions. In thy widest and most lawless excursions, the possibility of treachery or change in this woman, of prevention or delay from moral considerations, never entered thy thought. All

that knew us were apprised of our mutual passion ; all whose approbation was of value, were lavish of their approbation ; all to whom Louisa was accustomed to apply for counsel, had been strenuous in their commendations of her choice. My mother had expressed her delight at the prospect of obtaining this woman for her son ; had testified impatience at delay, and was eager to receive us under her roof. There were no bounds to the reverence and love which Louisa entertained for my mother. To contribute to her happiness would almost have been an irresistible motive for accepting the son, though her own heart had been neutral ; but her heart added to untainted fidelity and probity, an affection that was unacquainted with restraint, and all her wishes were absorbed in that of being indissolubly and speedily united to her cousin. What then but some jarring of the elements, some shock of nature, some coin-

cidence of physical disasters, could raise
L an impediment in the way of my hopes ?

As I approached the house my fears subsided ; no vestiges of earthquake or fire were to be seen. The house exhibited the usual tokens of safety and tranquillity. As I reached the door, Sidney came forth. We accosted each other with smiling civility. His cheerful brow dissipated any remnant of uneasiness that was not already removed.

I found Louisa alone in an upper room. She was sitting in a museful posture, leaning on her hand. For a moment my heart faltered with doubt, whether this was the attitude of thoughtfulness or dejection. On my entrance she looked up, and I perceived she had been weeping. She assumed a tranquil appearance at my approach, but there were tokens of constraint sufficiently visible.

My heart sunk within me at this reception. I scarcely opened my lips to

bid her good morrow ; but placing myself by her side, waited, in fearful silence, for an explanation of this scene. At length, in the confusion of my thoughts, I muttered some inquiry respecting her health.

“ No,” said she, “ I am not well. Sick : heart-sick.”

“ Good heaven ! What is the cause ?”

“ The want of fortitude ; the want of virtue. A sacrifice is claimed at my hands, which my pusillanimity does not hinder me from making ; but I cannot make it cheerfully. My reluctance, the growth of folly and passion, refuses to yield.”

“ Of what sacrifice do you speak ? Louisa Calvert is equal to the performance of her duty.”

“ Yes, but she is unequal to the seasonable discovery and steadfast apprehension of her duty. I saw it clearly a few minutes ago, but now it is misty and ambiguous. I waver, and I see that my

waverings proceed from cowardice and passion. This does not render me steadfast. It does not restore my resolution. It only heaps anguish and misery on my head." Saying this, her looks betrayed the deepest distress.

My alarms were importunate ; and, at length, throwing herself, with a burst of tears, into my arms, she continued :

" Not for myself only, my friend, but for thee also, do my tears flow. Self-denial is a lesson which I learned in my infancy, and in my father's house. The school of disappointment and adversity has taught me long ago what you are beginning to learn."

This was a terrible prelude. She proceeded ; but I anticipated the stroke she was about to inflict.

" This evening was fixed for the period of our union ; but that union must be deferred for many years, perhaps for ever."

" How say you ? For ever ?"

“ All engagements between us are at an end. They must not be renewed in less than five years. Meanwhile, you must comply with your cousin's invitation, and go to Europe.”

“ To Europe ? Must comply ? What language is this ? Yesterday you knew it not. What phrenzy has seized you ? The contract that made you mine is sacred, and all that remains to perfect it must be performed this very day. I do not solicit your compliance, but exact it. You have bereaved yourself of the power of retracting, and are bound to my mother, to myself, to your friends, by an irrevocable promise.”

“ Alas ! be it sacred or not, it can never be performed. It was made while ignorant of consequences ; ignorant of my duty ; I am now enlightened upon that head, and have uttered my unalterable resolution.”

I was lost in astonishment at the causes that produced this change. For a time I

persisted in denying that such a change had taken place. She was not anxious to convince me of the truth by loud exclamations. Her mournful silence, and her tears, were sufficient indications that the scheme of my felicity was blasted by some untoward event or malignant counsellor. My entreaties to be told by whom these resolutions were suggested, and on what motives they were built, were answered in broken accents, and reluctantly.

“I am not able to repeat the reasons which were urged. I only know that they were valid ; that they enjoin upon us a temporary, and, perhaps, an eternal separation.”

“Who was the reasoner that has made such stupendous discoveries ? Who has taught you to act against your promise, against the dictates of your own reason, the expectations and opinions of the world ? and what motives could his accursed ingenuity invent sufficient to sway you ?”

“Talk not thus vehemently. If this reasoner has erred, I have erred no less. While censuring him you censure me. I was indulging my gay visions this morning, when Sidney came and besought an interview. The reasons which he laid before me, for postponing my marriage and dissolving the engagement between us were just.”

“Sidney? Carlton? He dissuade you from marriage! What motives could he urge?”

“I am not qualified to explain them in the present state of my feelings. I should not state them clearly and impartially. If you will go to him, he will tell you what has passed. He wishes to confer with you on this subject.”

“His wishes shall be instantly gratified. I will go to him immediately.”

I entered Sidney's apartment in a state of perplexity and anger, which made me careless of all forms. Ideas floated in my brain which assumed no distinct

shape ; but they were connected with remembrances of Sidney's ancient pretensions to my cousin, and vague suspicions of malevolence or treachery.

He was sitting at a table, with books and papers before him. "So," said I, abruptly, and advancing towards him, here are mysteries which it must be your province to explain. Yesterday Louisa Calvert consented to become my wife, but to-day, it seems, she has changed her mind ; and, she tells me, you have been the author of this change. You have urged reasons not merely for postponing our alliance, but even for wholly dissolving the contract. You will not be surprised that this disappointment should distress me, and that I should expect from you the reasons of so strange and unexpected, and, indeed, unwarrantable interference. What have you discovered to make my marriage with my cousin less eligible now than formerly ? Till this moment, I have seen in your conduct, no

marks but of approbation, and have relied upon you as my strongest advocate; but now, it seems, the tide has changed, and you have persuaded her to recal all her promises, and thwart every expectation of her friends.

During this address Sidney's countenance became grave, but without embarrassment or dejection. After a pause, he replied in a sedate and mild tone, "It is true." There he stopped.

"True! But why have you acted thus? What objections have you found to this marriage? What vices or enormities have you detected in me which unfit me for being the husband of Louisa Calvert?"

"No vices or enormities: nothing but the want of age and experience: but my objections are not limited to you. They relate chiefly to your cousin. Her qualities, in my opinion, make this alliance improper. It is more likely that misery will flow from it than happiness.

I have endeavoured to convince her of this, and have, beyond my expectations, succeeded."

"Qualities in my cousin that make marriage improper? Pray, of what kind are they? They have entirely escaped my sagacity, and I should be grateful for the assistance of a friend in drawing them to light."

"I doubt much," replied he, unaffected by the ironical severity of my looks and tones, and eyeing me mildly and steadfastly, "I much doubt the fervency of your gratitude for a service like that; and yet I have no mean opinion of your generosity. You are passionate and headstrong, but there is, in your character, a fund of excellence, which, if not checked by untoward events, will hereafter render you illustrious. You have won my esteem, and I love you so much that I am willing to promote your happiness even at the expense of your temporary

gratification. I would save you from an alliance which would operate to your mutual destruction."

These intimations startled me. I re-urged, in a milder tone, my inquiries into those defects in my cousin which were adapted to produce such disastrous consequences.

"It is useless to discuss them," said he: "instead of regarding them as defects, you will account them excellences, and excellences they truly are. ~~These~~ qualities which have given birth to your passion, are the same which disqualify her for being your wife. In proportion to her candour and benevolence, to her tenderness and constancy, is she unfitted⁷ for an indissoluble alliance with a youth raw, unexperienced, with principles untried and unsettled, impetuous, versatile, liable each day to new impressions, and enslaved by a thousand romantic and degrading prejudices. I do not beseech your patient attention to arguments and

exhortations. I do not seek to convince you that Louisa Calvert, in proportion to the purity and elevation of her character, is unfit to be your wife. By my conduct on this occasion, I expect only to excite your rage, and to draw upon myself your upbraidings and suspicions. If any other emotions were excited, my objection to the marriage would not have existed. It was agreeable, however, to my conceptions of duty, to act and speak thus. I think I foresee all the consequences of my actions, and as this foresight has not shaken my purpose, these consequences, whatever they may be, will not molest my tranquillity."

It is impossible to describe the emotions which were produced by these words. A secret conscience whispered me that Sidney was right; that I was, indeed, that versatile, romantic, and ambiguous being which he had described; that the passion I had fostered for my cousin was built on inadequate founda-

tions, was unsupported by congeniality of character, was more allied to the impulses of sense and to the instigations of vanity, than to any better principle. This whispering conscience, however, was scarcely heard, and its intimations were neglected. I viewed the subject not through so cold a medium. My desires, though ambiguous in their origin, and, perhaps, transient and mutable, were vehement, and acquired new strength from this unexpected opposition. These desires dictated my opinions and my language. The interference of Sidney, in a transaction in which he had no direct concern, his attempt to controul his friend in a choice where her happiness alone was to be consulted, appeared to me audacious and presumptuous. I was likewise sufficiently disposed to question the purity of his motives, to impute his conduct to mean jealousy and rivalry. I did not hide these thoughts, and was,

by no means, sparing of surmises and reproaches.

He listened to me with unaltered features. At first I was inclined to suppose that my reproaches had possessed some influence, but when I gave him opportunity to speak, he declared that the light in which his interference had been viewed by me, and the resentment which it had excited, fully agreed with his expectations. My reproaches argued all that impetuosity of temper which he had already, in the secret of his own thoughts, ascribed to me. It added, if possible, new force to his objections against any union between me and his friend. "Your errors," continued he, "are of no rare or prodigious kind. They are incident to persons of your immature age, and contracted experience, and secluded education. They entitle you to sympathy and succour from those wiser and older than yourself. I

am your senior by a few years, and if I possess any superiority over you, am indebted for it to wiser instructors and larger observation.

“I have made no secret of the love which I once felt for your cousin. That love was founded on proofs of her excellence, which time has multiplied instead of lessening. That love, therefore, has not been diminished, but enhanced by time; but the happiness to flow from her union with me, must mutually exist, or it cannot exist at all. If undesirable, if unproductive of felicity to her, it must cease to be desirable, cease to be productive of happiness to me.

“You imagine that my opposition has its root in selfish considerations, that I labour to prolong her single state, in hopes that time and assiduities will win her favour to myself. Even while you utter these surmises, you are doubtful of their truth, and you fully expect that I will earnestly assert the purity of my

motives. These expectations will be disappointed. I am far from supposing myself raised above the frailties of my nature, that my conduct is exempt from all sinister and selfish biasses. I know that they sway us in a thousand imperceptible ways, that they secretly pervert those resolutions, and vitiate those reasonings, which, to our hasty view, appear the most enlightened and benevolent. I claim no merit but that of honestly, and strenuously labouring to discover and exterminate the suggestions of self-interest. I know very well that I am far from constantly succeeding, and the detection of my own mistakes, is the irksome, but inevitable fruit of every new meditation.

“It is true that I love this woman; that no man on earth estimates so justly, and admires so fervently her virtuous qualities; that no one is so qualified to make her happy, provided love was not wanting on her side. I know that this

love may, on some future occasion, start into being. Need I say that I desire this event?—that I regard, with aversion, any obstacle to its occurrence?

“It is true that she loves another, that her heart is devoted to you. I am grieved that her heart is thus devoted. I would willingly free her from this inauspicious passion, and restore her to that indifference which I desire that she should relinquish only for my sake. I repine at her choice, because I am not the object of it, but I should be guilty of falsehood and injustice, if I allowed you to suppose that this was the only cause of my repining, and that hence only arose my opposition to your marriage. No; it is founded on accurate examination of your character, and proof // which, to me, is incontestable, that the misery of your cousin, and your own misery, would flow from your alliance.

“You will imagine that prejudice and selfishness create, to my view, those dis-

advantageous qualities which I impute to you. I will not deny it. It is possible that I mistake your character. Hence the diligence of my scrutiny into your deportment, and into my own motives, has been redoubled. Hence my decision has been protracted, and my interposition delayed to the present hour. Hence I have not, as you seem to think, advised your cousin to dissolve all connection with you, but merely to postpone her marriage for a few years, during which that steadfastness of views and principles in which you are now wanting, may be acquired by intercourse with the world, and exposure to its temptations and vicissitudes.

“You have hitherto dreamed away your life in solitude. You have no practical acquaintance with yourself, or with the nature of the beings who surround you. You have nothing but distorted and crude conceptions, and passions lawless and undisciplined. You are governed

by the present impulse, rebel against all restraints, shrink from all privations, and refer nothing to futurity. Your attachments spring from vanity and physical incitements; they are transient as the hour, and variable with every variation in the objects which surround you. To link Louisa Calvert, by ties that cannot be unloosed, to such an one, would be devoting one being, whom I love beyond all mankind, and another, for whom, in spite of his defects, I have considerable esteem, to bitter regrets and incurable calamity. I cannot think of it."

These representations, urged with the utmost pathos and simplicity, produced a temporary effect upon my feelings. Without being convinced, I was at a loss for an answer. After a pause of some minutes, I left the house; and, returning to my lodgings, employed myself in revolving the topics which Sidney had urged.

The impression which his last words

had made upon me, speedily vanished. The more I brooded on the subject, the more equivocal his motives, and fallacious his reasonings appeared. I began to see nothing in his conduct but the stratagems of a selfish competitor, and called up all my courage to the contest with him. To compel him to recall his prohibitions, was not possible. To betake myself to solicitations and entreaties, was sordid and dastardly. My genuine province was to change my cousin's resolutions by entreaties or arguments. In this task, I imagined that little difficulty would occur; and relied, for success, on my own talents, and on the warmth of her affection.

Shortly I obtained another interview. Her deportment was no longer the same. Instead of the cheerfulness, and even gaiety, by which she had been formerly distinguished, and manners flowing from the union of affection and candour, she was melancholy and full of solicitude,

which she was at no pains to conceal. She eyed me with visible dejection and apprehension.

My discontents were sufficiently apparent, and augmented that anxiety which her conduct betrayed. A look, cast upon Mrs. Wallace, indicated her desire of conversing with me apart. Her friend seemed acquainted with the new embarrassments which had arisen between us, and left us to ourselves.

As soon as we were left alone, my cousin placed her chair close to mine, and pressing my hand between hers, said, in broken accents, "You have been with Sidney. He has talked to you, but not convinced you. He has repeated your discourse, and I see, too clearly, the inefficacy of his reasonings. O! my friend! would to heaven you could think with him and with me! and imitate that self-denial which duty imposes on me."

You mistake, said I, impatiently: duty

would prescribe a very different conduct. Should you listen to that, a lesson would be taught you very different from the suggestions of envy and jealousy.

At these words, her countenance changed into some expression of resentment. She withdrew her hand from mine. This resentment, however, passed away in a moment, and resuming looks of kindness, she replied, "I can bear injustice when committed against myself. I can also bear it even when committed against my friend. You misapprehend the character of Sidney, and I ascribe that misapprehension to causes that do not make you culpable. You have not enjoyed the means of knowing him, and your equity is blinded by passion. The time will come when that blindness will be removed, and your confidence in his integrity will be equal to my own.

"On this subject I desire not to reason with you; for reasoning will make

no conquest of your opinions, but will expose my own resolutions to be shaken, and lessen my tranquillity. And yet I fondly cling to the hope that reflection will convince you of the rectitude of my scheme."

"Your scheme! I know not your scheme. What scheme have you adopted?"

"I have mentioned it once already. Spare me the anguish of repeating it."

"You have uttered doubts and surmises, but I know not what it is that you finally intend. I have, indeed, talked with Sidney, but I will not suffer him to be your representative, and the announcer of my fate. What is it that you determine with regard to me?" These words were uttered in a tone that excited the consternation of my cousin. She looked at me with streaming eyes, but without speaking.

"What is it," continued I, "you mean? To reject me? To banish me? What have I done to merit the treatment of an enemy? Have I failed in any point of respect to you, or to my mother? Have

I violated any law? Have I offended, in any instance against virtue or decorum? Has a single day brought forth such damning proofs of my depravity? What is the crime? Let me know it, and let me be confronted with my accuser. Save me from the odious necessity of imputing fickleness and hypocrisy to the object of my devotion.

“ You have talked with Sidney, and must, therefore, know my resolution, and the grounds on which it is built.”

“ I know nothing from him but that I am a sensual, selfish, and hypocritical slave: that alliance with me will be, to Louisa Calvert, degrading and calamitous: that, instead of being beloved and esteemed, I merit only to be detested and shunned. This, then, is the sentence you pronounce on me. He whom yesterday you loved beyond-all mankind, in whose character you found no inexpressible blemish, and to whom you were willing to consecrate all your feelings and wishes, has, to day, become

a being hateful or terrible. Make haste, I beseech you, to inform my mother of this change in your opinions. Show her the extent of her error in imagining her son worthy of your esteem. Persuade her to despise me, to relinquish the hopes which she had formed of seeing my happiness and virtue established by union with you.

“Felix! this is too much from you. You have deceived my expectations. I had more confidence in your moderation and your justice. It is impossible that Sidney should have spoken thus. Heaven knows that my love for you has no wise diminished, that I esteem you as much as ever, but I deem it necessary to postpone an event which cannot be recalled, and to stay till your character is matured by that age and experience in which you are now deficient. And what, if your love be virtuous and sincere, what objection can be reasonably made to the delay of a few years? Your absence

will improve your understanding, your morals, and your fortune, and will not bereave us of the advantages of a pure and ardent friendship. Communication, as frequent and copious as we please, may subsist between us. Mutual sympathy and counsel may be imparted; and, by the practice of self-denial, we shall insure our claim to future happiness."

These reasonings were but little suited to appease my discontents. I endeavoured to demonstrate the visionary folly of her scheme, and dwelt upon the pangs of that disappointment which she would inflict, not only upon me, but upon my mother. "You can scarcely expect, I said, the approbation of my mother, whose fondest hopes, with regard to her son, have been fixed upon this alliance, and who will charge you with caprice and levity."

"Indeed," she answered, "I fear her censure; but I confide in the candour

of my deportment to prove to her, at least, the purity of my motives, though my arguments may fail to make any impression on her understanding. I will explain myself fully to her, and if I should be so unfortunate as to have offended her beyond forgiveness, it will, indeed, be a painful aggravation of my calamity, though it ought not to change a determination built upon such grounds as mine."

My vanity, as well as my passion, led me to imagine that my cousin's objections would easily be overcome. Her scheme appeared so wild and absurd, that I could scarcely argue with her patiently. It was modelling conduct by such artificial refinements and preposterous considerations, that it was more the topic of ridicule than ratiocination. Her purpose was so new, so remote from all her previous views, and so adverse to that scheme of happiness which she had formerly adopted with undoubting confidence, that I was prone to regard it as a

kind of phrenzy, which might maintain its hold for a time, but which would speedily fall away of itself, if it were not removed by argument.

At present little more was said on either side. I shortly after withdrew to ruminate on this strange revolution. The more thought I bestowed upon it, the more impatient and uneasy I became. My indignation and aversion with regard to Sidney increased. I began to suspect not only the disinterestedness of his conduct, but even that of my cousin herself. The change that had been effected, flowed, I imagined, from some unexplained cause, some cause which the parties were ashamed to avow.

This imagination was confused and wavering ; but it gave birth to complaints and insinuations which were heard with grief, and repelled or confuted with calmness and steadfastness. They were recounted in my presence to Sidney, in whom they appeared to excite no resentment, and whose deportment was unal-

tered by my reproaches. I was not studious to conceal from him my opinion of his interference. Finding his power over my cousin's sentiments was absolute, I laboured to convince him of his error ; and, when arguments failed, resorted to the most pathetic entreaties. These, however, availed nothing, and our interviews always terminated in anger and upbraidings upon my side.

These obstacles added new fuel to the flame which consumed me. If my affections had been cold or neutral, previously to these transactions, their nature was now changed. The danger of losing this prize appeared to open my eyes to its true value. The thought of postponing our union for years, was equivalent to losing her for ever. Nay, I derived more torment from this delay and suspense, arising, as I conceived, from perverseness or caprice, than from our total and everlasting separation. My vehement temper pushed me forward irre-

sistibly to the goal of my wishes. I would not believe but that the attainment of this good was within my power. I would not believe that, should all my efforts be frustrated, I could endure to live.

The ardour of Louisa's sensibility was the advocate on whose assistance I relied. Nothing but perseverance in her new scheme created a doubt of the sincerity of her love. I had innumerable proofs of her tenderness, and, therefore, was confident of vanquishing her scruples.

No wonder that, with a heart full of softness, compassion, and rectitude as her's, she would sometimes hesitate. My impetuosity overbore all resistance. While she listened to my pleadings, she was ready to yield. Frequently I imagined my success complete, and exulted in my happiness; but the scruples which disappeared in my presence were sure to be re-inspired by a single conversation with Sidney. On repeating my visit, when every obstacle was supposed to be

annihilated, I was always fated to discover them anew.

These incessant disappointments took away my hopes. I had exhausted every expedient and argument in vain. Every new day shewed me that Sidney's power was not to be shaken. My confidence in my efforts languished and expired. I resigned myself to gloomy suspicions, sullenness, and utter dejection. My vivacity and smiling prospects were flown. I regarded myself as one unjustly treated and betrayed. I found a mournful satisfaction in secretly upbraiding the perfidy of Sidney, and the inhumanity and fickleness of my cousin. My visits to the Wallaces became less frequent; they were shorter, and passed without any conversation from me. They produced nothing but pain, and were willingly postponed or exchanged for the solitude of my chamber or the fields. I seldom failed to meet Sidney at his sister's; and the tranquillity of his deportment, and

the affectionate manner in which he continued to be treated by my cousin, I construed into insults upon myself. These mortifications I endeavoured to avoid by shunning the house.

My deportment, it was easy to see, was by no means regarded with indifference by Louisa. She eyed me, when present, with an air of ineffable solicitude. She could not escape the infection of my sadness. Her attention was alive, as formerly, to all my looks and words; but the vivacity which they formerly inspired, was now changed into grief. When we chanced to be alone together, she expressed her tenderness and her regrets without reserve. On such occasions she renewed her declarations of confidence in the propriety of her deportment, and endeavoured to win my concurrence.

These interviews and these contests, by always affording new proof that her determination was irrevocable, became

irksome. I ceased to contend with her objections, but listened, in a silent and sullen mood, to all she could urge. If an answer was extorted by her entreaties, my words were dictated by resentment. They charged her with unfeeling obstinacy and infatuation; with treachery to me, and ingratitude to my mother.

The last topic had always produced a more powerful effect upon her feelings than any other. She frequently confessed that her decision would be greatly, if not irresistibly, influenced by my mother's choice. She was inexpressibly anxious with regard to the light in which her conduct would be viewed by my mother. She had written a copious letter to her friend, in which she had explained the reasons of her conduct with the utmost simplicity, and endeavoured to prepossess her in her favour of her scheme; insinuating, at the same time, that my mother's authority would be of more weight with her than that of any other human being;

and that the imputation of error or ingratitude from this quarter, would be avoided by any sacrifice, and at any price.

The sentence which was so much dreaded by Louisa, was not, in the same proportion, desirable to me. I had other passions beside love, and these lessened, though they did not annihilate the value of a gift, conferred, not from submission to reason or affection, but merely from deference to authority, and for the sake of avoiding unreasonable imputations. In truth, these imputations were not to be expected from my mother. After an intimation that her authority would prevail where her arguments failed, she would be anxious to maintain a neutrality. It was far from certain, that with a mind dispassionate, sobered by age, and prone to refer all events to their remotest consequences, she would not side with her niece, and fortify her present resolutions. Hence no hope was founded on my mother's interference.

CHAPTER VI.

THIS state, so fertile of calamity to me, could not long be endured. After musing on the same detestable impressions, and growing hourly more weary of their uniformity, my mind betook itself to the contemplation of that scheme which had formerly occurred to me with powerful recommendations, but which my engagements with Louisa had suspended. In the scene around me, there was nothing but provocations to melancholy. Every object reminded me of the blessing which an untoward destiny had ravished away, and contributed to deepen my gloom. I, therefore, determined to resume my ancient design of visiting Europe.

This design was strongly recommended by Sidney. It will appear to you by no means incompatible with the continuance of affection, and even of one kind of intercourse, between Louisa and me. To me, however, my departure was the extinction of all my hopes. Three thousand miles constituted an interval like death, and the absence of years was equivalent to eternity.

This design had been vaguely suggested by my friend; but she had, by no means, insisted upon it. She seemed contented that marriage should be postponed, but regarded my voyage to Europe with a reluctance she was unable to conceal. On this head, indeed, Sidney's arguments had not produced the same conviction as on others. She could not see but that my present situation abounded with sufficient motives to virtue, and trials of fortitude. That on the busy theatre of Europe I should forget both her and my country, was not improbable;

and this change was likely to banish all ancient impressions, without reflecting any degree of guilt upon me. This dread was confirmed by my own representation, which confounded the postponement with the dissolution of the contract, and my assertions that if I left my country, it would be with no design of ever returning. Her knowledge of my mother's views, who was, for various reasons, an enemy to this design, augmented the reluctance which she felt to concur in it.

Her aversion to my voyage, operated, in some degree, as an argument in its favour. I conceived, that though she had resisted every other plea, it was possible that she would revoke her determination, if that alone would detain me. At all events, residence in my native country was grown intolerably irksome, and I resolved to stay on no condition but that of her immediate compliance with my wishes.

The arrangements necessary to my departure were easily made. Having fixed the day of my sailing, and made suitable preparation, I determined to pay my cousin a last visit, and exert all the powers of which I was possessed, to vanquish her scruples. I resolved to recapitulate and enforce every argument which had hitherto been urged, and to offer her the alternative of accepting me, or of seeing and hearing from me no more.

It happened, seasonably for my purpose, that, about this time, Louisa had gone a few miles from the city, on a visit to a venerable lady, who usually passed her time without company or any species of amusement. Louisa proposed to spend two or three days with this person, during which no other visitant was likely to intrude. Sidney, too, was called by some engagement, to a distance, and would not, therefore, be at hand to counteract my efforts. I designed to go to this house in the even-

ing, and taking my cousin apart, make a final and vigorous effort in the cause of my happiness.

For some days previous to this interview, my thoughts were full of tumult and impatience. I was fully aware of the importance of my undertaking. On the success of this interview depended the condition of my future life. According to the event which should then take place, — I should either be blessed with the possession of this woman, — I should continue in my present abode, in the discharge of dutiful offices to my mother, in the enjoyment of conjugal felicity, and the improvement of my patrimony, or I should wander, homeless and unattended, through the world. I should separate myself for ever from my family, my friends, and my country, and should seek, in a distant land, a new society, new enjoyments, and new motives. My sanguine temper led me to anticipate success rather than failure. When I re-

viewed the proofs of tenderness which I had received from my cousin; the reluctance with which she admitted the possibility of my voyage; the intrinsic force of the reasons which I should be able to allege in favour of wedlock; the favourable circumstances, the lonely and solemn season when our interview would take place, and especially the absence of Sidney and Mrs. Wallace, who had hitherto been strenuous adversaries of my cause, and without whom none of these impediments would ever have subsisted, I trusted that I should extort from her some avowal or some promise, which she should be unable to recall.

The day, so momentous to my happiness, at length arrived. I was not sorry to find it dark and inclement. Storms would increase the probability of finding her alone, and add to the solemnity of our meeting. I designed to wait till night-fall, and then repair to her dwelling, whence, if my attempt should not

succeed, I would hurry to New-Castle, where lay the vessel in which I intended to embark.

On what slender threads does the destiny of human beings frequently depend ! The caprice of a moment, an inexplicable and transitory impulse, in consequence of which our steps move one inch forward or on one side, will sometimes ascertain the tenor of our whole life, will influence the happiness and govern the activity of one man, and through him, controul the destiny of nations and the world.

Throughout this day, my mind was but ill suited to any social occupation. I was too deeply absorbed in weighing the consequences of the impending interview, to spare much reflection to the claims and interests of others ; but this theme became, by degrees, painful. My impatience was heightened into agony, and before noon had arrived, I resolved to hasten the meeting with my cousin, and set out immediately upon my visit.

While equipping myself and my horse for this purpose, some untoward chance called to my remembrance a person who lived near my ancient abode at Burlington, and with whom I had maintained a cordial intercourse from an early age. He had lately assigned me a commission which my abode in the city made it easy to perform, and which it was of some importance to him to have speedily and faithfully performed. It was merely to call on a kinsman who resided in the city, and inform him, in three words, that a certain person had returned to Burlington, who had formerly absconded, in consequence of debt. This person was in debt to my friend's kinsman, and as he had resumed his place in society, with a seeming confidence and fearlessness, it was to be hoped that he might be compelled, by legal means, to fulfil his former engagements.

This affair might be dispatched in ten

minutes, and to have neglected it would have been wholly inexcusable. I set out without delay for this end. I had walked about three squares, when turning a corner, suddenly my attention was slightly attracted by a sound, issuing, as it seemed, from the upper windows of a house, near at hand. It was a faint shriek, uttered, apparently, by female organs. It was a feeble effort of the voice, and followed by deep silence. It was too indistinct to inform me whence it came. I could merely guess that it came from above, and from within some dwelling hard by, but from which of the houses in sight, and whether it denoted grief, or pain, or surprise, or affright, I was wholly unable to determine. I checked my steps an instant, and looked upward and around, but saw nothing to confirm or assist my conjectures, and therefore quietly resumed my way, and re-entered on the meditations which had been suspended by this incident. The circum-

stance could not be perceived to possess any relation to me. Its true nature was not likely to be discovered by any inquiries which were possible to one in my condition, and possessed no claim upon my curiosity.

Such is the indifference and heedlessness of one who espies the flash of a musket in the thicket, but is unapprised of the existence of an enemy. He imagines it a glow-worm or a meteor, and rests in supine security. Instead of betaking himself to headlong flight, he loiters till the lurking foe has replenished the pan, and a second attempt urges the fatal bullet to his heart.

I found the person of whom I was in search, and imparted the tidings which I brought. He expressed much gratitude for this service, and inquired if I had any purpose of writing to his kinsman. I answered, that there was, at present, no urgent demand for a letter; that my engagements would lead me a

different way in a few hours, and that I had not designed to write to him during several weeks, or perhaps months.

He apologised for making this inquiry, by saying that an unlucky wound in his right hand, had, during some time, disabled him from writing ; that no one was at hand to perform for him the office of an amanuensis ; that the present affair was of a very urgent and momentous nature ; that his future welfare and subsistence depended on the recovery of the sum which was owing by this fugitive ; and that the slightest delay might preclude him from this recovery. If I had designed to write to my friend, it would have been an extraordinary favour to him to perform that office immediately, and to insert in my letter some directions with regard to the measures to be taken on this exigence.

To comply with this request, made diffidently, but with great earnestness, would, in a very slight degree, encroach upon

my plans. It would fill an hour, and enable me, with more patience, to wait the coming of the period which I had originally fixed upon as most proper for a meeting with my cousin ; I therefore consented to write immediately ; and having received such information as he chose to give, returned home to compose my letter.

The letter being written, it was necessary to put it on board a vessel going to Burlington. I went in quest of the vessel, and, having deposited the script in suitable hands, returned home, designing to set out forthwith on my projected visit. It was a fortune equally untoward that made me re-enter my lodgings, instead of mounting my horse, which stood ready for my use at some distance. Knowing that my absence might last for ever, I felt reluctance to depart, without leaving affectionate adieus with the good lady at whose house I lived.

Having entered the house, I was in-

formed that a messenger had been in search of me, and had waited for my return some time ; but being, at length, weary, or in haste, had gone, leaving, however, a billet, which was put into my hand. This billet contained compliments to Felix Calvert, and a request that he would call at the corner of Front and — streets, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

On inquiry I was told that the bearer of this billet was a young female, of a foreign countenance and garb, and with an air and demeanour that seemed to prove her a waiting-maid or upper servant. She had expressed much impatience and anxiety to see me, and had left the most earnest request that they would not fail to deliver me the billet. This impatience was visibly increased by the information that I was preparing to set out on a journey, from which the period of my return was wholly uncertain. She repeated that the receipt of

this billet, and compliance with the request contained in it, were of the highest importance, and that no consideration must induce them to neglect delivering it.

The surprise which this circumstance was adapted to produce, was heightened by observing that the corner of Front and — streets was the very spot at which the shriek just mentioned had excited my attention. A vague suspicion was suggested, that some connection subsisted between the invitation just received and that mysterious voice. My acquaintance in the city lay in quarters distant from this, and there was no circumstance within my memory, or observation, enabling me to guess at the character or situation of the tenants of this house. It was spacious and magnificent, was probably inhabited by persons of the better class, and the messenger belonged to a female, since none but a female was likely to charge a waiting maid with a commission of this kind.

This new incident exercised a strange dominion over my thoughts. My attention, burning as it was with eagerness and impatience respecting my cousin's deportment, was diverted into a new channel. I did not hesitate in resolving to comply with this summons. An hour had been mentioned sufficiently early to permit the performance of my previous engagement. Between three o'clock and dusk the interval was long enough for many an interview, and the dusk of the evening was the period most suitable for my visit to Louisa.

My anxiety to gain some basis for conjecture as to the character and views of my inviter, led me to reflect upon the possibility of making some inquiries on that head previous to my visit. I now remembered that, some weeks before this, I had stopped at a shop nearly opposite to this mansion, to purchase some trifles, for which I had just received a commission from my mother. The

seller, by name Mrs. Rivers, was a little, talkative, courteous woman, who was likely to have dealt as much in the history of her neighbours, as in the prices of laces and ribbons. The money I expended with her gave me a title to respect, and much lively discourse had passed between us, not strictly connected with the quality and cost of her wares. She was quick, communicative, affable, and made any laborious advances to acquaintance superfluous. Her I resolved to visit, and, by duly managing the conversation, endeavour to extract from her all the knowledge of her neighbour which she possessed.

I went forthwith to the shop. Salutations were exchanged. The price of this and that was required and given. Gloves and hose were spread upon the counter. One article was pretty and another cheap. She had sold this for two-pence more than she now asked; and that being the last pair remaining, she would let go for

a shilling under her customary price. While her tongue was thus employed, I was meditating on the best means of leading the discourse to the desirable object.

Meanwhile, there entered the shop a young woman, who asked for something, for which she paid, and immediately withdrew; yet not till Mrs. Rivers had uttered a score of interrogatories, such as "how d'ye do, Jenny? How is Miss Neville this morning? Does she never go out now-a-days? Why don't she call? When does she leave town? Don't she leave town this summer? How can she bear to stay? Has she got rid of her cold? Was the *cruel* of the right colour? Does she want any more of it?" and so forth. These inquiries were made without intermission, and apparently with no view to be answered. The girl, however, stammered out yes or no, and showed a sort of consciousness and trepidation that attracted my notice.

While viewing her, I noticed her garb, aspect, and general demeanour to be nearly such as had been described as belonging to the bearer of the billet. A suspicion arose that this was the same person. This suspicion was changed into certainty when I saw her trip across the street, and enter a gate belonging to the corner house.

“Pray,” said I, to my companion, pointing to the house in question, “who lives there?”

“Don’t you know? You look as if you knew. I’ll warrant you, you know, but ask ——.”

“Why? why should I ask if I knew already?”

“I can’t tell, but if you really don’t know, I’ll tell you.”

“’Tis a young lady who came not long ago from England. Her aunt or mother (I am not sure which, I confess, for my part, I doubt, but they commonly think her aunt) came first. Mrs. Keith, a good

lady, give her due, and an excellent customer to me. Many a penny has she put into my pocket. Poor lady! I was quite inconsolable at her death. She began to droop just after the young lady's arrival, and died eight months ago."

"Was Mrs. Keith a foreigner?"

"Yes; no. She was partly one. She was born in Jersey, and married, early, in this town. Mr. Keith was of an ancient and rich family, and a lawyer. He made a great deal of money by the law, and went home* to enjoy it. Poor man! he died just after he got ashore. This is several years ago; but Mrs. Keith returned, to lay her bones, as she said, in her native country; and, poor woman, she did, in a very short time, the very thing which she came to do. She died, and left that house, and a very handsome

* Before the revolution, Europe, and especially Britain, was universally called, by the American colonists, *Home*.

property, to her niece, Clelia ; Clelia Neville."

"Is this lady married, or likely to be so?"

"Not that I know of. She is quite young and handsome ; but she goes out but little, and sees scarcely any company. The death of her aunt was a severe stroke. She has been melancholy ever since. Jenny tells me, that from one month's end to another, she never goes out of her chamber and her garden, and sees not a living soul besides her own family. She dresses and lives very genteel. She is quite the lady. A mighty reader, Jenny says, writes much, paints landscapes, and plays very tastily upon the—something—it is a hard, outlandish name. This is all she does. She never does a hand's-turn at any kind of work : not for want of knowing how to do it neither ; but because she thinks it vulgar, or because she likes reading and playing better.

“ She lives a very strange life. To tell you the truth, I am half a mind to think, that there’s something like a sweetheart at bottom ; some disappointment of that sort in England, that made her come out here. Her aunt did not know of her coming. It was very unexpected, and not at all liked by the old lady. The first time they met, Mrs. Keith was quite ill, and the young lady did not behave like one who had found a welcome reception. There was abundance of tears and sad looks between them then, and a good while after. Something, for certain, more than the death of her aunt, who was quite old and might look to die soon, is the matter with her now, but what it is I can only guess.

“ Jenny knows , I am sure she knows ; but she is prim and close-mouthed about it. I could never get a hint of any thing from her. This is quite a topping dame. She reads and paints as well as her mistress, and won’t stoop to be familiar

with servants or any body. She often comes here to buy any thing, in my way, that the family wants, and talks about her mistress, but very cautiously. She is no tattler, that's the truth, and I know little but what I pick up myself (our houses, you see, are opposite), and from the neighbours, but still ——."

Mrs. Rivers's loquacity was here diverted by the entrance of a new customer. Three o'clock had almost arrived, and I imagined that my informant had nearly exhausted her stores of knowledge. I wanted an opportunity of reflecting on what I had already heard, and, therefore, putting my purchases in my pocket, I took my leave. I made a circuit of half a mile before I reached Miss Neville's door.

I was young, romantic, and without experience. There was somewhat in this adventure wonderfully fitted to excite my curiosity and rouse my hopes. The slight portrait that had been drawn by

Mrs. Rivers exhibited a captivating person, elegant accomplishments, dignity of birth, and opulence, and, in a sufficient degree, an unblemished reputation. What motive could induce such an one to demand a visit from me, was a theme of perplexing, but no unpleasing inquiry.

These inquiries were, at length, terminated by my arrival at her door. I had been summoned hither, but the summons was anonymous, and the cause was unexplained. I was somewhat at a loss, therefore, in what manner to demean myself, for whom to inquire, or what motive to allege for my visit. This perplexity hindered me not from knocking. The signal was speedily obeyed. The girl I had seen at Mrs. Rivers's appeared at the door, and, before I had time to open my lips, desired me to walk in, and ushered me into a drawing room, on the second story.

Here I walked to and fro, for some minutes, alone. All the misgivings of

youth, the timidities of inexperience, and the indefinable hopes and fears congenial with my visionary and enthusiastic temper, took possession of me. I looked at one door, and at the other, and listened. I mistook a casual sound for that of approaching footsteps. These fallacious omens, were, after some time, succeeded by unquestionable ones. The door from an inner chamber opened, and there entered, in a sort of hurry, and with various tokens of embarrassment, a lovely female, arrayed in mourning.

I made my obeisance with an ill grace, and on being requested, in a tremulous and soft voice, to sit down, with difficulty found a seat. She seated herself near me, and, after a short pause, said,

“I am not so fortunate, Sir, as to be known to you, and scarcely know how to apologise for the liberty which I have taken in requesting this visit. I am conscious that it may bear a strange and disadvantageous appearance, but my heart

acquits me of any impropriety. My motive has been gratitude, for the greatest service which it is possible for one person to perform for another. You have saved my life, at the imminent hazard of your own, and I could not forbear seeking this opportunity of presenting you my thanks. The obligation can, indeed, never be discharged; but your benevolence and intrepidity entitle you, at least, to know that she whom you have rescued from the worst of deaths is not ungrateful for the benefit."

At this address I lifted my eyes, and fixed them on the speaker. The blood thrilled at my heart in recognising, in this person, the form and features of her whom I had borne in my arms from a house in flames, whom I had seen only for a moment, but whose image, impressed in such vivid hues upon my fancy, I had supposed to have been indebted for its charms to the illusion of

my senses. Every line of that portrait was now visible. My surprise was equal to my delight; and these strong emotions overpowered, for a while, my timidity and awkwardness. I started, involuntarily, on my feet, and expressed my pleasure at this meeting with an eloquence and fervour that were new to me.

She listened with emotions which I was unable, at that time, to interpret. Her eyes were downcast, her cheeks glowed, sorrow appeared to contend in her features with joy, and confidence with doubt. Her tongue faltered in expressing her sentiments, and every gesture betokened a confusion of feelings, inexplicable, but bewitching.

This perplexity and reserve gradually lessened, and our conversation reverted to the events that brought about this interview. I mentioned the mistake in which I had been hitherto involved as to the person I had saved, inquired into

the situation of the ladies whose roof it was, and by what means she became exposed to the danger.

“I was merely a visitant of those ladies,” she replied. “I spent the day with them, and they prevailed upon me to remain during the night. One of them was indisposed, and there was some reason to dread the increase of her indisposition. Hence I was more willing to stay.

“On fully recovering mysenses, I found myself in the arms of an hospitable lady of the neighbourhood. I was not hurt, and the terror was quickly removed. I procured myself to be removed hither, to my own house, as expeditiously as possible. I did not distinctly see my deliverer, and some time elapsed before the newspapers acquainted me with his name. My servant procured, by some means, information of the place of your abode; and my eagerness to render you the

thanks that are so justly due, has made me overlook forms."

"Let me thank you," said I, "in my turn for this negligence of forms. The mistake into which I was led, at the beginning, respecting your person, made me remiss in profiting by so favourable an opportunity of knowing you. I hope you will allow me to repair my error, and authorise me to see you frequently."

She admitted my request with looks of the utmost benignity and satisfaction. The discourse passed to topics of a general and speculative kind. The transition was not effected by me. She led the way, almost imperceptibly, into new tracks, and glided from one theme to another, with dexterity and gracefulness inimitable.

Very far was my companion from forward and loquacious. She was merely earnest and full of thought. She spoke much, and with mellifluent volubility; but this arose from organs, flexible be-

yond any that I had ever known, and from a mind incessantly versatile and active, drawing, with a facility almost sportive, from inexhaustible stores of sentiment and language.

Our topics tended but little to throw light upon the real incidents of her condition. There was the fullest display of her opinions. There were details of her intellectual education and the progress of her understanding. Transactions were related or alluded to, in which she had been a witness, and some in which she had been an actor; but these exhibited only her modes of judging on abstract subjects, and threw very faint and reflected light upon her principles of conduct.

Books came, at length, to be mentioned. She appeared to be no unimpassioned votary of reading. She had, at almost an infantine age, imbibed an invincible attachment to books. She had read, for a long time, with indiscriminating appetite. Amusing and frivolous productions oc-

cupied her attention for a while, but her taste gradually acquired refinement. She distinguished between faults and beauties, between substance and show. Her facility of approbation, and her eagerness for novelty, abated. While some performances lost all or much of her esteem, others acquired stronger claims to admiration. The habits of inquiring into the reasons of her choice, of pausing and sending forth her mind upon discovery, of calling up and expatiating among the ideas linked with the suggestions of the writer, became vigorous and permanent. From seeing and feeling, she had long since proceeded to investigate, select, and arrange.

To me this spectacle was wholly new. I had met with persons of extensive knowledge, but their minds were not pliant and elastic. Their discourse was jejune, disjointed, and obscure. In them the mind gave out its stores, if I may so express myself, with difficulty and reluct-

ance. Their expressions were meagre and coarse, inadequate and vague. Their tone was an insipid sing-song, or a monotonous uniformity. Their utterance was stammering through precipitation, or drawling through sluggishness. Their stock of words was too small to allow them to select suitable expressions with the requisite speed. They erred through perverse habits, or a vitiated taste.

The picture now before me was a dazzling reverse of these imperfections. Nature, accident, or education, had given this lady so large a store, and such absolute command of language, that she had nothing to do but to adjust her pause, her accent, and her emphasis. The stream was spontaneously and ever flowing. All her care consisted in leading it through proper channels, and giving melody and meaning to its cadences.

My conceptions of the dignity and beauty of eloquence, of that power of utterance which bestows the utmost grace

and force upon our own conceptions, or on those of others, were, probably, carried beyond the due bounds. My education, in this respect, had made me a mere Roman. From much converse with ancient orators and rhetoricians, I had been taught to regard speech as the faculty of greatest value and power. Excellence in this was most worthy of generous ambition, and to this the power of retaining and arranging ideas was subordinate and secondary.

Our modes are very different from those of the Latins. We have not lived long enough in a warm sun to acquire the vivacities of utterance and gesture which distinguish the Italians. Our northern extraction makes us sober and dispassionate, and our government raises a wholesome mound against popular tides and billows. The perfections of speech have scope only on private occasions. There is no scene of deliberation where thousands are convened, where every

auditor is qualified, by education, to comprehend and relish the refinements of speech. Eloquence, in the Roman sense of that term, is driven from among men. It expired when the forum, from a theatre of government, sunk into a market-place; and advocates and statesmen were supplanted by butchers and herb-women.

But there is another sense in which its value and its efficacy are as great as ever. Persuasion and instruction are employments of as frequent recurrence, and as great moment now, as at any former period. The instrument is no less powerful to charm the eyes and ears, to sway the reason and affections of one or a few. Hence, the rhetoric of conversation awakened, in the highest degree, my juvenile enthusiasm. I prized myself more highly on account of my attainments in this art, than for any other accomplishment; and no excellence in others gained from me more fervent

veneration, than their skill in conversation, their power to adapt their theme to all persons and occasions, without sinking into levity or indecorum; of guiding and bending attention at pleasure, of joining sagacity to promptitude, and correctness to fluency. Hence, in listening to my new acquaintance, I derived pleasure beyond what I had ever experienced from the exhibition of intellectual excellence.

In the midst of our discourse, the evening overtook us. Four hours had passed away with imperceptible speed. I looked up and recalled my previous engagement to remembrance, but it appeared with the dubiousness and faintness of a dream. It threw me into a temporary perplexity, and being aware that my visit had been longer than decorum usually prescribed, I took my leave.

CHAPTER VII.

I SHOULD in vain attempt to describe the state of my mind after this interview. A deep and thorough revolution had been wrought in it ; of the full extent of which, however, I was not yet aware. The image of Miss Neville, clothed with nymph-like and fascinating graces, hovered in my view ; a tumult of delicious feelings was awakened, which I cherished with diligence : and, during some time, I avoided every act or meditation tending to divert my thoughts into a different and customary channel.

Gradually this tumult subsided, and allowed me calmly to survey my real situation, and to figure to myself the con-

sequences which this incident must produce. Irresolution and despondency took place of my rapture. I thought of all that had passed between Louisa Calvert and myself; of the earnestness with which I had sought her hand; of the obstacles which had occurred to my hopes; of the toil which I had undergone to overcome these obstacles; and of the measures which my recent despair had dictated.

The first sentiment which now rose in my heart, was that of self-upbraiding. I had acted with the blind impetuosity of a lunatic. The dupe of deceitful rumour. I had stifled that emotion which the image of the rescued lady had excited. I had laboriously shunned the smooth and forthright path, and bent all my infatuated zeal to accomplish my destruction and that of my cousin; but my error was not now to be retrieved. I had gone too far to return, to stop, or even to linger.

What! had I then ceased to love Louisa Calvert? Was a short interview with this stranger, in which nothing but the specious surfaces were visible, sufficient to change into indifference or aversion, that headlong zeal, which, an hour before, had burned in my heart; had urged me to the brink of despair; had made me determine to abandon my mother, my friends, and my country! How fully had I justified the censures and precautions of Sidney! What a monument of mutability and caprice should I make myself, were I now to relinquish my pursuit, and devote to another those wishes and affections which had so lately belonged to my cousin! This would be ignominious and disgraceful beyond any guilt which my nature could incur.

And yet, had not Louisa rejected me? Had she not determined to postpone our union to a remote and indefinite period? Was not our betrothment utterly dissolved? Were not my happiness, my

safety, my life, voluntarily offered as a sacrifice to the prejudices of another ? I had persisted in contesting with her determination long after the prospect of success had vanished. I meditated flight and exile, the sorrow of my mother, the neglect of my patrimony, the desertion of my friends ; why ? because this woman had chosen to reject my vows, in order to preserve, unimpaired, her haughty independence ; had refused to confide in my rectitude and constancy ; had loaded me with scorn.

Of this folly it was surely time to repent. It was time to discontinue my base and servile supplications, to leave her to consult the wisdom of Sidney, and to cultivate her own means of dignity and happiness. “ Let me claim to myself the same privilege. Let me seek happiness from one more able and more willing to confer it ; who is governed by sentiments and principles harmonious and congenial with mine ; who is not the

slave of the ambiguous and cold-blooded scruples of another. Why should I decline my intended visit? Why not seek my cousin, and afford her the satisfaction of my acquiescence in her schemes?

“ She is right. Sidney’s knowledge of my character was more accurate than my own. I have been too precipitate. There are points of difference between Louisa and myself, incompatible with conjugal felicity, and which no time would probably annihilate. Parting will be best. Let me hasten to her presence; let me assure her of my full conviction of the propriety of her schemes. It will afford her the purest and most rapturous joy. Her sympathetic heart has long been agonized at the sight of my sufferings, and her ear been wounded by the murmurings of my injustice. It is time to dissipate her griefs, and restore her to complacency and cheerfulness.”

Such were my reflections; in consequence of which I pursued my way to

my cousin's habitation. These sentiments were not inequitable. They diffused a serenity and calmness through my bosom, to which I had long been a stranger. It did not occur to me to note the abruptness of this change, and to mark how little I had been indebted for it to the force of reason. Before my interview with Clelia Neville, these considerations were overlooked. The voice of equity was then too low to be heard, but now I had suddenly started up into a dispassionate and rational being. I could perceive and acknowledge the justice of her conduct, and acquitted her of all malignity and folly. Such is the imposture which men practise on themselves. Such are the folds under which selfishness and passion hide themselves, and so easily are their boastful and arrogant pretensions to disinterestedness and magnanimity admitted by their fond slave.

These reflections were succeeded by others relative to my new friend. I pur-

sued, with earnestness, the comparison between the virtues and accomplishments of these women. I dwelt with delight upon the personal attractions, the polished understanding, the affluent and musical eloquence, the studious and seclusive habits of Miss Neville. I dwelt upon the propitious omens that attended the beginnings of our intercourse, the fervency of that gratitude which so eminent a service as that of saving her life, at the almost inevitable hazard of my own, was suited to produce, and which the extraordinary mode adopted by her to convey her thanks, sufficiently testified. I was her only visitant. She had given, even in so brief an interview, indubitable proofs of being highly pleased with my demeanour. She had accepted, with eagerness, my offers of continuing and advancing our acquaintance. She was a stranger in a foreign land, unfettered by obligations springing from kindred, or marriage, or poverty; unamused by varieties

of company, and the shifting scenes of dissipation ; fond of loneliness and books, and musing. Was it possible for invention to assemble more charms in one form, and more auspicious incidents together ? Was she not the unknown type, after which my fancy, in the solitude of Burlington, had delighted to fashion the images of friend, mistress, wife ?

“ But what is my cousin ? No music in her utterance ; no vigour or grace in her elocution ; no symmetry, no lustre, no bewitching hues, no radiance in her glances. She is an object of esteem. Her virtues are divine : but they, alone, cannot give birth to that ineffable passion which blends two beings into one. And yet, is virtue nothing in the balance of him who meditates wedlock ? Is it nothing that Louisa loves with tenderness and constancy, that her character is fully known, and is void of blemish ? Are integrity, and moral sensibility, and rare genius, so easily outweighed by mere ex-

ternal qualities, whose intoxications are sure to disappear in nuptial familiarity, and to sink to the level of their opposites? What know I of this stranger that is inconsistent with innumerable foibles and frailties? She is plausible and smooth; but may she not conceal, under this delusive mask, a thousand weaknesses or prejudices?

“It is true that she may be no less excellent in mind than in person. There is nothing destructive of each other in the perfections of form and of mind. This alliance, however, is yet to be proved. It remains to be discovered whether there do not secretly exist insuperable impediments to the wishes that I have formed. What are the means of this discovery? How does it become me to demean myself? not, surely, in such a manner as will terminate every hope with regard to my cousin. Does she merit to be made unhappy by a full disclosure of my feelings? What if further and more

intimate acquaintance with Miss Neville should prove my first impressions to be false?

“ Shall I then declare to my cousin not only my change of opinions with regard to her, but my new-born preference of another? What will that be but to give her torment, which the failure of my expectations, and my wishes, with regard to Clelia Neville, may prove to be wantonly and needlessly inflicted? What will that be but to rob myself of the power of reverting to my ancient path, and loosing totally my hold of my cousin's affections? Far am I yet from loving this stranger: farther still may our future intercourse place me from loving her. This new occurrence has only shown me the possibility of happiness without my cousin.

“ What then is incumbent on me? Let me hasten the intended interview. Let me yield to her remonstrances and projects; consent to consider our be-

thoroughment as dissolved, maintain with her, henceforth, the intercourse of friendship, and meanwhile cultivate the society of the stranger; study her character, endeavour to comprehend her situation. If in those there be no impediments to a more intimate and sacred union, endeavour to effect that union. If there be such obstacles, then may I adopt some new scheme of happiness, and either revive my claim to Louisa Calvert, or bid an eternal adieu to these shores.

These principles appeared to me just. They argued, perhaps, a kind of sensibility, less ardent or less permanent than is commonly found in upright and ingenuous youth; but the speculative maxims that countenanced and sanctioned my deportment were not immoral. It is easily seen, however, what perils and temptations I was going to multiply around me. How hard I should find it to avoid, in adhering to this plan, falsehood and duplicity. The sequel will

show how little qualified I was to resist these temptations.

Late in the evening I visited my cousin. I found her alone. Her friend had retired to her chamber earlier than usual, and left her to pursue her reveries without interruption. She was sitting, with a paper open in her lap, her arms folded, and her eyes moist with tears.

She endeavoured to assume a cheerful air at my approach, but her sadness was imperfectly concealed. My curiosity was naturally excited by these appearances. On questioning her as to the cause of her apparent discomposure, she gave me the letter.

"From your mother," said she. "I have just received it; you may read it."

I accordingly perused it, hastily. It was a copious epistle, written in answer to one received from my cousin, in which the reasons of her treatment of me had been explained. It was dictated by maternal candour and affection. My cousin

was applauded for her fortitude, the sacrifice of inclination to reason. She was exhorted to continue under the guidance of the same principle, and was gently chidden for laying stress in questions so immediately pertaining to her own happiness and duty, on the assertion or authority of others. This rebuke related not to my cousin's deference to the councils of Sidney, but merely to her appeal to my mother's wishes, and her declaration that my mother's reason or will should be the rule of her conduct. This submission was earnestly rejected. She was exhorted to act with single views to her own felicity, that being the object of supreme regard to my mother, and that being incompatible with wedlock contracted without the utmost independence of choice, and the entire acquiescence of the understanding.

She then proceeded to state her reasons for dissenting from Louisa. She dwelt upon the flexibility and ductility

of the youthful character, how much it depends upon the incidents befalling it, and how delicate those contingencies are by which the ultimate rank and condition of men are governed.

She acknowledged that her son's principles were yet unformed, but she believed his biases and propensities to be good, and that no circumstance could be imagined more favourable to the growth and stability of my virtue, than marriage with one of my cousin's excellence.

She had not failed to study my character. She trembled on perceiving my susceptibility of new impressions. Her zeal for my welfare had made her anxious to screen me from the contagion of bad example; to avert all temptations incident to my age; to the possession of opulence; and to freedom from restraint. She had particularly deprecated my voyage to Europe, where my appetites would be provoked, and my prejudices fostered in that sphere of nobility and luxury in

which my birth would inevitably place me. The surest and only anchor of my felicity and her's, was marriage with a virtuous woman, together with abode in my native country, and conformity to its simplicity and rectitude of manners. One of these advantages she knew was inseparably connected with another. Nothing but success with my cousin would prevent my departure. This event was more irreconcilable with her maternal feelings than any other, but she trusted that her fortitude was not unequal to the trial.

These considerations were urged with pathetic simplicity, and with a candour which ensured their success. Having finished the perusal, and laid down the paper, I said, "And what effect has this letter produced?"

"You may easily guess at its effect. It has plunged me into perplexity and grief. I cannot endure to offend your mother and mine. That, indeed, I need

not dread. She knows the goodness of my motives, and will pardon me; but I cannot endure to make her unhappy, or even to put her happiness to hazard. Your voyage is dreaded no less by me than by her. As her reason and her love are equally averse to it, so are mine. Should you persist in this resolution, I shall not condemn you. The impetuosity of your feelings makes you unhappy in the sight of that good, which, in your apprehension, is unreasonably withholden from you. You want to fly from sorrow, and to put an end to fruitless hopes, by flying from your country and from me. You descry no danger in your path, and are therefore fearless and rash. I imagine that I see those dangers, and that your youth will not escape them; but am unable to communicate my feelings to you, and to reconcile you to the practice of a salutary self denial. Should you go, according to your late intimations, should any evil befall you in your

way, or should our fears for your integrity be realized, what will be your mother's anguish? What will be mine? I see, too clearly, that life would be insupportable." These words were accompanied with flowing tears, and every muscle of her face swelled with grief.

My nature would not suffer me to be insensible to these tokens of a generous and disinterested affection. Their tendency had hitherto been thwarted by those excruciating regrets, which these very tokens, by adding new strength to my passion, were adapted to produce. Those fears for my safety, those proofs of her virtue and her love, gave new edge to my desire, and made her conduct, respecting me, appear still more to argue infatuation and folly. The difficulty of embracing her conditions, of acquiescing in merely amicable intercourse, and my resolution to end the fruitless contest by eternal separation, were augmented in proportion to her

aversion to my voyage. I likewise was careful to remember that this ground might insure my victory, and hoped that marriage would be chosen by her in preference to absence.

The last opinion was enforced by the circumstances of our present interview. It was plain, that by assailing her constancy in this failing moment, I should triumph over her scruples; but the late occurrences had secretly modified and given new directions to my thoughts. My abode in America was no longer a source of unsatisfied craving and despondency. My visions of happiness were no longer collected round this point. I could now endure to think of my cousin as a sister or a friend, and to exchange courtesies with her without the poison of resentment and of jealousy. Agreeably to this change of sentiments, I now said to her:

“I designed, on this visit, to leave with you my last farewell. I am hope-

less of subduing your scruples, which my heart and my reason condemn as injurious to yourself and me. I have, therefore, made every suitable preparation for my voyage; my clothes are packed, my trunks prepared, and my passage bespoken. The ship lies at Newcastle, ready to profit by the next favourable wind, and I designed to have reached the ship this evening."

My companion turned pale, her limbs trembled, and she seemed ready to swoon. This weakness was counteracted by a powerful effort; and she continued, with apparent composure, to listen.

"This resolution," continued I, "will not create surprise — will not be wondered at — will not be condemned by you. It is true, that I have no fears for my integrity. I see not more numerous or more powerful temptations in that scene than in this; on the contrary, my abode in Europe would make me happier and wiser. My own interest, separately

considered, would be in every respect promoted by it; but I cannot, and ought not, to have an interest separate from my mother's and from yours. My resolution, ardent and strenuous as it was, is now changed. I will not go."

This unexpected and abrupt conclusion, excited in my friend as much surprise as joy. She looked at me with an air of doubt; "What!" said she, hesitating, "how is this change?"—"Are there not sufficient motives for it? Is not the sacrifice of my inclination, in this point, fully due to my mother and to yourself?"

"Alas! there is nothing due to me. My scruples appear to you groundless and absurd. My conduct argues, in your opinion, a heart callous, and cold, and indifferent to your welfare. With such sentiments (and such is my unfortunate condition, that my conduct cannot fail to give birth to such sentiments), you cannot conceive any sacrifice due to me."

"You have a very contemptuous opi-

nion of my understanding and my heart. Hitherto I have deserved that opinion, but not now. I still deplore the error into which a fantastic prudence and an unwise counsellor have led you, and would willingly root it out. To do this, I have tried in vain ; and I now give up my scheme in despair : but I am no longer blind to the purity of your motives ; I acknowledge and revere them, though I owe to them my misery."

At these words, a serene pleasure lighted up those eyes which had, for a long time past, betokened nothing but melancholy. " And is it so, my beloved friend ? Now, indeed, shall I find my resolution in danger of yielding. I have grieved at perceiving your injustice towards me ; for, not to have seen the goodness of my intentions from the beginning, was to be guilty of injustice. My affection has, in some degree, been lessened with my esteem ; but this precious acknowledgment has restored you

to your former dignity, to your first place in my affections, and has made me happier than words can express.

“But you know my wishes with regard to you. They are not limited to merely your staying among us. There are other conditions, which, perhaps (I am inclined to hope every thing from your magnanimity) you will consent to, and consent to cheerfully.”

“Let me know them.”

“Do not you know them? You must give me very much of your society. I must see you and hear from you continually; there must be no limits to your confidence; but, for some years to come — Recollect your youth, your unformed sentiments, your mutable affections; the influence of time, observation, and experience, to new mould the character: for some years to come, you must be only my friend.”

“I do not mean, said I, to make an incomplete and partial sacrifice. What you wish, I will be.”

This promise was accepted with eagerness and gratitude. She gave a thousand artless proofs of her joy, her tenderness, and her confidence in my integrity. The feelings which this deportment excited in me were far from joyous or tranquil. I could not but reflect on the causes of this change in my resolutions. I saw that I deserved not the eulogies and thanks of my cousin; that she ascribed to me magnanimity to which I was a stranger; that the present state of my thoughts demonstrated the wisdom of her conduct, since they proved me to be as capricious, fickle, and prejudiced, as her friend had represented it possible for me to become.

But while her praises inspired me with nothing but humiliation and compunction, my false shame hindered me from confessing the true state of my feelings, and unveiling the genuine motives of my actions. I betook myself to searching for apologies and arguments in favour of my dissimulation. I endeavoured to per-

suade myself that concealment was but justice to my cousin, whom the disclosure of my thoughts would render needlessly unhappy, and whose estimate of human conduct was superfluously rigid. I flattered myself that time would speedily determine my destiny with regard to Miss Neville; that if my love for her should be frustrated or immatured, it was equitable, on the whole, to conceal from my cousin that it ever existed; but that if it were conducted to a prosperous issue, it might be disclosed without injury or difficulty. I should be without guilt in the eyes of my cousin, since she had voluntarily loosened the bonds of our betrothment, and had denied me the name, privileges, and expectations of a lover.

These sophistries quieted, for a time, my self upbraidings; but they were sure to be awakened anew, and every proof of her affection and confidence in me was a sting, goading into new sensibility

my slumbering conscience. The anxiety and fluctuation that hence arose, were to be stifled and stilled by new arguments and subtleties, whose influence was, in like manner, merely temporary.

This disquiet did not escape the piercing eye of my friend. Being void of suspicion, she was inclined to impute these appearances to my hopes, respecting herself, assuming occasional dominion. When her demeanour was most affectionate, tender, and confiding, my compunctions were always most acute, and the discomposure of my thoughts most apparent. It was at such times, that, had my conduct been truly disinterested, those regrets which her candour ascribed to me, would naturally have arisen and acquired new strength; and thus was she unavoidably confirmed in her error.

The emotions which, on these occasions, her looks testified, were of a very complex and mixed kind. Those tokens

of unhappiness in me, conjoined with the cause whence she imagined it to flow, and with that magnanimity which enabled me to withhold all crimination and complaint, and, in a short time, to regain my usual composure, excited her admiration, her pity, and her love. Her ingenuous manners always betrayed the sentiments of her heart; but sometimes she expressed these sentiments in words, and employed terms which, while they were designed to fortify my resolution and restore my tranquillity, only gave new edge to my remorse, and rendered my self condemnations more bitter.

Every day made the disclosure of the truth more difficult, for every day added to the number of my artifices and subterfuges; and, by increasing my guilt, augmented the humiliation of confession.

I saw the nature of her error, but could not rectify it without unlimited disclosure. I was frequently compelled to answer her interrogatories, or comment on

her remarks. I was frequently denied the middle and equivocal path of silence, and was obliged to countenance her error, not only by ambiguous looks, but by false assertions. She did not allow me to pass over my interviews with Clelia Neville in silence; but having rendered to me, at each meeting, a full account of her own transactions, she always proceeded to demand from me a similar account of the disposal of my time.

I foresaw the consequences of even mentioning the name of Clelia Neville. Curiosity would immediately exert itself to know her character, her situation, the circumstances leading to our acquaintance, and accompanying every interview. Surprise and suspicion would be awakened by the concealment which I had hitherto practised. Painful, elaborate, and, perhaps, inefficacious artifices and fictions must be, thenceforth, employed to divert or elude her conjectures. She would immediately procure an introduction to

the stranger, and that union of sagacity and frankness which she so eminently possessed, would speedily unravel the maze. Wholly to suppress her name, therefore, and to pretend a different employment of those hours that were devoted to her, were unavoidable. This task was rendered less difficult by the removal of Mrs. Wallace's family to a villa, at a small distance from the city. At this season, it being midsummer, they maintained as little intercourse with the town and its inhabitants, as possible; and were seldom visited by those who could molest their benign repose by tales of slander. Sidney's engagements continued to detain him abroad.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEANWHILE, my first visit to Miss Neville was followed by many succeeding ones. The second visit was paid agreeably to her invitation. This passed away without producing any new impression. General topics of morality or literature were discussed with complacency and eloquence, and the admiration at first excited by her talents, was no wise diminished.

The interval between this and a succeeding interview was occupied by one set of ideas. My mind pondered incessantly upon her features, accents, and words. Having been reviewed and dismissed, they returned anon, and were

once more mused upon and scrutinised. All other occupations were tedious and impertinent. I lay upon my bed, or strolled in the fields, beset and haunted by this image from morning to night. I looked forward to the hour when decorum would permit me to go to her house with impatience, and with a thousand perplexities and misgivings as to the seasonableness of my visits. These perplexities were always dispelled by the manner in which I was received. It was always with the blushes of agreeable surprise, and the smiles of a fervent welcome.

The hour, thus devoted, was generally in the evening. I insensibly preferred its friendly obscurity to the garish eye of day. At this time, I hoped to find her more disengaged from social and domestic occupations than at others. In this respect, I quickly found that all hours were nearly alike. She had no intimate companions of her own age, no uncere-

monious and familiar visitants. She enjoyed the protection of a few respectable families, relatives or friends of Mrs. Keith, and as much of their society as she chose to exact; but there being much dissimilitude in age, taste, and especially in religious opinions, between them, the intercourse was rare and brief. At this time, likewise, two of these families with whom she had been most intimately connected had withdrawn from the city's sultry precincts to the country.

She was almost constantly alone. She chid me for adhering to the formality of knocking at the door, which I, thenceforth, omitted; and, entering always without ceremony, found her seated in a garb of elegant negligence, either in her drawing-room, or, if the air permitted, in the summer-house placed at the farther end of an extensive garden. This latticed building was embowered by a vine, originally brought from the Canaries, whose purple clusters were plucked by

her waiting maid, and presented to us on a china plate, accompanied with nectaries or peaches, produced in the same garden, and with lemonade or sherbet. Except at these times, our interviews were wholly unmolested by the presence or the fear of intruders.

You must permit me to dwell somewhat longer on the incidents of that period. I now look back upon them as on the tissue of some golden dream. Their bewitching influence on my juvenile feelings, was enforced by their novelty, by the suddenness and abruptness with which they succeeded to the homely enjoyments and clownish occupations of my previous years, and by their agreement with those fictions of fancy with which a romantic education had made me enamoured, and which I had pursued with an utter hopelessness of their ever being realised. Were it not for the endless series of disasters and calamities that originated here, I should be disposed to

confound the circumstances of these interviews with those of the dreams which haunted my seclusion at Burlington.

There was, indeed, nothing wanting to complete the enchantments of that scene. All the refinements of a polished education, the luxuriances of youth, and the attractions of beauty, were possessed by my friend; but she joined music to her elocution, and taste to her knowledge. Her favourite instrument was a *viol d'amour*, from which she extracted the most soothing and voluptuous tones, and to which she was wont to add a voice of boundless compass and inimitable flexibility. These filled up the intervals of conversation, and spread such a hue of fanciful delight and romantic dignity over the accompanying circumstances of moonlight, solitude, a garden, and a bower, that they can never be remembered without tremulous emotions of wonder and pleasure.

In the course of our interviews, I was

naturally inquisitive as to the genuine condition of Miss Neville. I was anxious, likewise, for the establishment of confidence between us. I wanted to know every thing concerning herself, and was not unwilling to impart, in my turn, most of the particulars of my own history. My notions of politeness hindered me from accomplishing either of these ends by simple and direct means, by bluntly inquiring into her history, and uncere- moniously unfolding my own. I conceived that some curiosity was necessary to be betrayed on her part, before I could justly be explicit. Some opening or invitation, either tacit or expressed, which might gracefully lead to questioning on one hand, or confession on the other.

These invitations or openings never occurred. I frequently introduced such topics as were favourable to my purposes. I talked of Europe and Britain, of emigration to America, of the motives which usually lead to emigration. I

imagined and related the adventures of emigrants, and painted innumerable motives which were possible to incite to emigration. I made these imaginary circumstances approach more or less to a resemblance with her own, or what I guessed to be her own. Her own sex, age, single state, her relationship to Mrs. Keith, and such incidents as the talkative shop-keeper had communicated, were adroitly interwoven with my narrative, and the effect of these resemblances on her countenance and demeanour diligently noticed.

All these ingenious stratagems were useless. They served no purpose but to diffuse over my companion an air of thoughtfulness and melancholy. I believed that I saw in her features, the workings of her mind. I saw her busy at one time in reviewing her past condition ; I marked that she shrunk from the remembrance with aversion and grief, or with sundry tokens of embarrassment

- and trepidation ; that she solicitously started other topics ; and that ease and cheerfulness returned merely in proportion as we lost ourselves in general and literary speculation.

These appearances, while they baffled my contrivances and slackened my efforts, gave new edge to my curiosity. Every resolution which I formed in solitude, to trample upon forms, was defeated by my awkwardness and diffidence, and by the unseasonable return of those scruples which forbade me to extort from another what that other was apparently unwilling to communicate.

The same motives made me no less unwilling to expatiate upon my own private history. I imagined that there was want of dignity in discussing the particulars of our household and our revenue, in anticipating curiosity by dwelling on one's birth and parentage. I was aware that the mention of my mother and my cousin might lead to expectations or re-

quests of being introduced to them, or to surmises and conclusions respecting the condition of my heart, unfavourable to the end which I proposed in cultivating her society. I was studious to describe myself as one standing, in a considerable degree, alone ; as having few or no connections in my present situation ; as having lately arrived ; and as being merely a sojourner and guest in the city where I dwelt. I endeavoured, particularly, to inspire the belief that my hand and my heart were unappropriated by any foreign or previous engagement ; and my manners tended to evince a state of mind, if not actually enamoured of herself, yet unfortified against, and liable to such impressions.

One motive of curiosity, in relation to herself, was weakened by her manners. It was obvious to suspect or imagine obstacles to the success of my views, arising from her former or actual situation. This suspicion was quickly removed by a kind-

ness in her manners, that approached, at certain seasons, to tenderness ; by glowing hues and downcast eyes, when certain topics were discussed, and certain situations experienced ; by a yielding sensibility, which made tones and glances more eloquent and more expressive than any words.

On these occasions, intelligence between hearts is communicated long before the proffer and formal acceptance of vows ; verbal confessions are, indeed, necessary to our happiness, but merely to ✓ dissipate that uncertainty created by the magnitude of the good which is sought. By augmenting our desire, it enhances our anxiety, impatience, and doubt.

To this crisis, however, which my impetuosity, continually brought near, my diffidence long deferred my actual arrival. Half a score times have I gone to her with a full resolution to explain my feelings ; but the nearer I approached the eventful moment, the more signifi-

cant and more nearly bordering on sincerity was the topic of our conversation ; the more incommodious, protracted, and conscious were the pauses of our general discourse ; the more turbulent were my sensations, and the more invincible my incapacity to speak. 'There was, at those times, a physical obstruction to speech ; my utterance was palsied, and, to articulate a syllable was no less impossible than to lift a mill-stone. To lay my hand on her's, though almost courted to do so, was no less impracticable. The will was strong, but its command over my muscles, whenever it arose, was annihilated.

It was impossible for things to remain long in this state. Feverish circulation, ardent musing, incessant watchfulness, and repeated disappointments, were rapidly injurious to my health. My vivacity in Clelia's presence, the earnestness of my discourse, was sensibly diminished. Her company was sought with more

fondness than ever ; but I grew despondent, museful, prone to silence—and inquietude was deeply written on my cheek.

These tokens did not escape her notice. They were not fully understood by her, but they added new pathos to her features, and tenderness to her accents, and they finally produced those measures on her side, without which my silence would never have been broken.

The constitution of man is compounded and modified with endless variety. The wisest and soberest of human beings is, in some respects, a madman ; that is, he acts against his better reason ; and his feet stand still, or go south, when every motive is busy in impelling him north. He cannot infer from his conduct, on one occasion, how he shall act when the same or a similar occasion hereafter occurs. It is vulgarly imagined, and perhaps truly, that the sexes are naturally distinguished by their conduct when under the influence of love ; that nature

has unalterably assigned to woman the passive or retreating, and to man the active province ; that lovers, confident of their success, are bold, forward, more abundant, and impassioned, and impetuous in their rhetoric, than at any other time. This maxim was realised in my deportment to my cousin : there I was precipitate and bold ; I hearkened to no scruples, and brooked no delays ; but now, my feelings and demeanour were totally reversed. I was not doubtful of success. I believed that as much felicity would be imparted as received by my confessions, and yet was I dumb.

One evening, when seated in Miss Neville's drawing-room, the conversation had been carried on with less vivacity than usual. As the moment of parting approached, my inexplicable despondency increased. At length, just as I was preparing to leave my seat, and the last " good night " was ready to fall from my lips, my friend placed herself beside

me, without formality, apology, or invitation. Hitherto she had given me no proof of equal familiarity. My blood flowed with new swiftmess, and the flame that burnt at my heart, spread over my countenance a new crimson. She spoke, not without some faltering, but in a tone of exquisite tenderness.

“Stay a little longer. You must not go yet. You have first a small account to settle with me.”

“Indeed !” said I, much alarmed and half suffocated with emotion.

“Be not frightened,” resumed she with a smile ; “it is true, you have offended ; but I shall not be extremely rigid in exacting the penalty.”

“Offence ? Have I, indeed, offended you ? Nothing was further from my purpose. The hand that injured you, I would cut off ; the heart that fostered a single thought to your prejudice, I would tear from my bosom.”

“Your hand has not offended me. It

is your heart that has been criminal, and I take you at your word. Yet, you need not do violence to your heart, but only to the feelings which have so long been harboured in it. Put me in possession of these feelings. Lay them open before me, and drop, at length, that veil of odious and unfriendly secrecy which has shrouded all your sentiments and feelings. Think you I had not noticed your inquietudes? that I have not shared in them? that I have not longed for an opportunity to lessen or remove them? Indeed you mistake. I have caught from you all your sadness, have mourned over your unknown misfortunes, but have more bitterly wept at seeing that you deem me unworthy of partaking of your sorrow. I have endured your silence and injustice long enough, and am now determined to wrest from you that confidence which is my due."

Is it not strange, that even this address had no tendency but to make motion and

utterance more difficult? After a pause, she resumed: "How have I deserved to be treated as your enemy? Has any thing been wanting to convince you how dearly I prize your happiness? What farther proof is needed? There is none which I will refuse."

Half dubious and reluctant, she now put her hand in mine, and continued: "you are an invincible man. You are cruel and unjust. You refuse to confide in me, and will not enable me to give that proof of my claim to your confidence which you think necessary. Whatever proof you demand, I will give. I will withhold nothing."

"Nothing."

"Nothing. What do you ask?"

"Your love."

"It is yours."

Of all moments in the life of a human individual, surely this is most pregnant with felicity. One like me, ardent with youth, inattentive to futurity, unchastised

by reason, unsobered by experience, it was calculated to bewilder and intoxicate. Those lips, whose sweetness and whose music had hitherto charmed me at a distance, were now near enough for the softest whisper to be heard. They were now opened only to enchant me with the oft repeated assurance, "It is yours: long, very long, has it been yours." They were shut only to confirm the vow by testimonies still more tender. The spell once dissolved, the scruples that had so greatly tormented me, vanished in a moment, and left me in a state in which moderation and forbearance became lessons as necessary to be taught, and as difficult to practise, as confidence and self reliance had been before.

That night was spent in a tumult and elation of thought approaching to delirium. The image of my cousin rarely intruded. It was only when some sleep had been obtained, and a new day arose, that the transactions of the preceding

evening began to assume a more tranquil aspect, and I had leisure to inquire: "What is now to be done? Speedy and auspicious beyond the painting of my most daring hope, has been the terminating scene of this drama. Only five weeks are past since, lying in this very chamber, I was mournfully ruminating on the incidents of a voyage on which I was the next day to enter, and which was to bear me for ever from my native soil. How should I have held that folly in derision which should then have teased the ears of my despair with a tale of such events as have since occurred, and have endeavoured to illumine my benighted soul by persuading me that such was the destiny reserved for me!

"But what must be my future conduct? Has not the period arrived when dissimulation and concealment must be laid aside with regard to my cousin? I love another, and my passion is accepted and returned. That which she wantonly,

or arrogantly, or rashly cast away, has been found, and is cherished as an inestimable good by another. I must go to her this very day, and tell her that my hand and heart must never be her's.

“Unhappy girl! How little will such tidings accord with thy fond hopes! Thy eyes, whenever I meet thee, beam with benignity and pleasure. If thy vivacity be sometimes tinged with a shade of sadness, it is from observation of that melancholy which my deportment has hitherto betokened, and which thou fondly ascribest to the struggle between my devotion to thee, and my reverence for virtue. Thou imaginest that, however hard the conflict, the victory has ultimately fallen to the side of magnanimity and duty, and congratulatest thyself on these proofs of constancy and worth in him whom thou lovest with a passion the purest and most ardent that ever glowed in the female bosom.

“How wilt thou be astonished on dis-

covering the truth, to find that this tissue of appearances was merely the garb of hypocrisy ! How bitterly wilt thou deplore, not merely the sudden ruin of that structure of happiness to which thy heart was devoted, but this defection from sincerity, this revolt from gratitude, this trampling upon duty, of which I shall appear to be guilty !

“ But why should I thus haste to make her miserable ? Do I build my confidence on sufficient grounds ? Have I not had bitter experience of the instability of human resolutions ? the frailty of schemes composed of the elements of hope and fear ? Clelia loves me : of that she has afforded me sufficient proof ; but, in spite of the illusions of passion, I cannot hide from myself my ignorance of her real situation and her character. What untoward events may not arise to postpone, or for ever to preclude that blissful consummation which wedlock bestows ? Ought I not, at least, to

ascertain her acquiescence in the desirableness of marriage? Ought I not, at least, to gain her consent to ratify irrevocable vows at some definite, however distant period? Having accomplished this, the disclosure of my situation to Louisa will then be seasonable and proper. Before, it will be but hazarding my reputation and my safety on a fluctuating and deceitful sea. This night shall she be persuaded to fix the nuptial day."

Full of these turbulent feelings, I hastened, at the usual hour in the evening, to Miss Neville. She was alone, and afforded me a welcome more fervent than usual, and fraught with that tenderness which became our present situation. After some cursory topics, she glided into a description of those surmises and conjectures which led her to adopt the conduct of last evening; the considerations of decorum, which had long deterred her from pursuing any means for

extorting from me my feelings : and inquired into the reasons of so singular a backwardness on my part to claim that friendship from her, which I could not but have discovered in her a perfect readiness to bestow.

This inquiry was made with symptoms of anxiety in my companion which I could not fail to notice, and which I thought disproportioned to the occasion. It seemed as if her fancy pictured to itself some cause of a formidable nature. Whether this cause related to myself or to her, whether her apprehensions sprang from the belief of my knowing some particular in her own condition, or from surmises respecting my mother and my cousin, it was impossible to conjecture.

These reflections were suspended while I laid before her the truth.

“ Mere bashfulness !” said I. “ I loved you, but my tongue refused the office of interpreting my sentiments. I believed that my passion was not unan-

swered, but this emboldened me not. It is strange. I am unable to explain it. My timidity had no basis in reasoning. It existed only in your presence, and in spite of resolutions formed in solitude."

She looked at me with a scrutinising and anxious glance. "Is that possible?" she emphatically exclaimed.

"Why not? What other cause could exist? I am confident of your integrity; I am conscious of my own. Situated as you and I are, what bar could arise to obstruct the declaration of our feelings? They are innocent and laudable; and, to obey them, forfeits no fame, and violates no duty."

She cast down her eyes at these words; yet her perplexity, though not removed, was lessened. A secret witness, in my own heart, whispered a censure which made me fully share in her uneasiness. The possibility that my betrothment to my cousin, and the mistakes under which she laboured, had, by some untoward

chance, been made known to my new friend; the unfavourable judgment she might pass upon my conduct, and the embarrassments or obstacles to my felicity which might thence be created, overpowered me with terror.

I repeated more earnestly, "Is not our affection innocent and laudable? Know you aught of me that would make it otherwise? Tell me, I beseech you."

"No," she replied, "I know nothing of you but what redounds to your glory, and places you amongst the first of men. I know you better than you at this time imagine. Long have I known you, and can bear witness to that unparalleled magnanimity which makes you worthy of the devotion of a pure heart."

These encomiums were strange and unexpected. She knew more of me than I imagined! and for a longer time! My conduct has been disinterested and wise! Had she exerted indirect means to obtain this knowledge? Had she been de-

ceived and misinformed, or was her judgment such as to bestow approbation upon that which my own conscience had condemned? These words, however, had confuted my first conjecture. I had no longer to fear the effects of a morality too scrupulous, or a sagacity too eagle-eyed.

Yet, whence then could flow a perturbation so visible? Was it from reflections on her own misconduct?

This image was of too awful and portentous a kind not to make me shake off my puerile embarrassments. After a considerable pause, I addressed her thus:

“Clelia Neville! we are now arrived at a critical moment in our destiny. It becomes us to walk erect, with a thorough knowledge of our path, and with no possibility of being entangled by suspicion or overtaken by repentance. There are marks in your countenance of apprehension and distrust. You have ascribed my former diffidence to some cause un-

known to me. Doubt and fear have found harbour in your thoughts. Whence do they proceed? What is the meaning of those solitudes which I now witness? You have acquitted me of any guilt. As you value our mutual happiness, be explicit and sincere, and tell me whether there be any thing in your own conduct that should lessen you in my opinion, and bereave you of that love which I have proffered to you."

"No," she replied with some degree of sadness, "there is nothing. I have had the faults of inexperience and youth, but my intentions have been free from malignity. My heart is pure, and is as worthy of you as the heart of woman can be."

"I believe thee," said I, folding her in my arms, "and let me on these lips seal my vows of everlasting honour. Thus do I devote my life to the cause of thy felicity. Now my soul knows no wish but one; a wish in which thine, if

thy assertions be sincere, will as eagerly participate. There are ties without which our union, and of consequence our happiness, is incomplete. I can know no rest till these ties are formed. When shall that event take place? When shall a solemn rite make Clelia Neville my wife?"

Instead of that blushful and tremulous rapture which I expected this intimation to produce, a sudden shock pervaded the frame of my companion; she uttered a shriek of terror and surprise, and, shrinking from my embrace, threw herself on a sofa in an agony unspeakable.

The effects of this scene upon my sensations, may be easily imagined. The first momentary dread that some fatal stroke of disease had fallen on her, was supplanted by different forebodings. Their object was terrible, indeed, but vague, misty, and obscure. They menaced nothing less than extinction to my new-born and darling hopes.

I seated myself by her side ; I took her hand and pressed it to my lips ; I dared not lift my eyes or utter a word. She did not withdraw from my kindness, but leaning her face on my bosom, poured forth incessant tears. I struggled, after the first burst of passion was exhausted, to obtain words.

“ You do not answer me. Have I vaunted of my happiness in vain ? Have I, in seeking your love, done no more than pull ruin upon my head ? Speak, I conjure you. Will you not be mine ? ”

She answered only by new grief.

“ Torture me not with suspense : whatever be my doom, let me, at least, have the consolation to know it. To-morrow, to-night, this very hour, will not Clelia Neville consent to be my wife ? ”

Still I could obtain no answer but tears, and the deepest sighs. I had too much reason to infer a denial from these appearances ; but my happiness was too deeply involved in this discovery to make

me satisfied with vague surmises. I urged my question with augmented vehemence.

At length, she with difficulty articulated: "Alas! not now; it must be postponed."

"Postponed! Blast not my ears with that accursed word. Recall that sentence if you wish me to live."

She shook her head. I continued: "Postponed! God grant me patience! For how long? For months? For weeks? Let me have the foresight, at least, of respite to my misery; of end to my pangs. How long must our marriage be postponed?"

"I cannot tell. An overruling fate must decide. Perhaps for years, perhaps for ever."

At these words, my equanimity wholly forsook me. My mind was plunged into the gloomiest despair. I fixed my eyes upon the floor; and, forbearing to notice my companion, pursued the disastrous

tenor of my own thoughts. This reverse was as fatal in its influence on my happiness as the events preceding it had been auspicious. I could not trust to my senses that informed me of this reverse. They had deceived me. Comforted with this reflection, I started from my dream, and turned my eyes on my companion. In her features I read the confirmation of the tidings. Flowing tears, and sighs rising from the bottom of her heart, were tokens of their truth.

But what was the obstacle to my felicity? Was it such a groundless scruple as had actuated my perverse cousin? Might I not hope to remove or rise above it? Was the character of this woman made up of the same refractory materials? Would not her aversion be subdued by intreaties or by arguments? Somewhat revived by these hopes, I again addressed my weeping companion.

“ You tell me that our union must be deferred. The period is uncertain,

Whence arises this uncertainty? Whence comes this obstacle? It must, it shall be disregarded or surmounted."

"It cannot be."

"Cannot be! Let me judge of its insurmountable nature. Tell me what it is?"

She was silent. She had no power to answer.

"Will you banish me for ever from your presence? Will you discard me from your love? And shall I not know in what I have offended? Shall I not join with you, and trample down impediments with which your single strength cannot cope?"

"Alas! No earthly power can remove them. Slight obstacles, superable by human force, I should set at naught, but this ——"

"Shall be set at naught. Thou art mine. It will be vain to refuse or hesitate. Whatever rite, divine or human, is necessary to cement, to ratify our

vows, shall be fulfilled. I hearken not to scruples. Denials I will not hear. No power of others or yourself shall stop my way to the possession of your hand. In this resolution I will no longer repine. I will argue or supplicate no more, for thou shalt be mine."

"Alas! good youth! thy confidence is vain, thy efforts will be fruitless. I cannot be thy wife, for I am—*a wife already!*"

"A wife! Clelia Neville a wife! She belongs to another! The obstacle, indeed, is not to be surmounted. My happiness is gone; my trust in the sincerity of others, in the blandishments of fortune, in the fictions of probability, in the suggestions of my own discernment, in the consolatory accents of hope, is gone!"

A wife! That little word was sufficient wholly to reverse my sensations; to throw me from my pinnacle of joyous confidence, and leave me whelmed in the

utter darkness of despair. I can scarcely tell what were my first gestures, or what were the words I uttered after my senses had been struck by this fatal intelligence. My heart swelled with horror, indignation, and grief; with indignation at that hypocrisy which I imagined to have been exercised to entice me to the verge of this precipice; horror at the guilt to the commission of which I seemed to have been rushing; grief at the closing of my prospects; at the fruitlessness of all my efforts after happiness; of all those humiliations and artifices which I had employed to prolong the ignorance and elude the suspicions of my cousin. Thus had the wiles of the deceiver thrown back upon himself the well-earned penalty of disgrace, disappointment, and despair.

I broke from her presence in a mood half made up of sullenness and rage. I shut myself up in solitude. I avenged myself by curses on my evil fortune;

by muttering to the unconscious walls
my abhorrence of her dissimulation and
concealment; by half-formed vows of
abjuring the society of mankind; of
flying from my hated country; of with-
drawing from life.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM upbraiding Clelia, my infatuation passed to wreaking my impotent resentment on my eousin, whose perverseness, by driving me to search elsewhere for happiness, exposed me to this misery and ignominy. Sidney was likewise detested as the primitive cause of my misfortunes ; as the great dispenser of ill, whose malignant agency would never fail to blast my most auspicious and best concerted projects, and from whose wanton persecution I could only hope to escape by placing oceans and continents between us.

This fit of passion gradually remitted its violence. After some hours, spent in a kind of phrenzy which only wanted ;

duration to be as ferocious and destructive as any that receives the name, my thoughts began to flow in a more equable course. Time hushes every storm, and when the hurricane has ended its career, every flowing of the billows is less impetuous than the last; till, at length, the tranquillising power "*summâ placidum caput extulit undâ.*" Thus it is in the tempests of the mind. Hope breaks through the cloud which hung over us and shut out the day, and brings back serenity and radiance.

Insensibly my mind reverted to the contemplation of those events which preceded my first meeting with Miss Neville. I called back my ancient feelings with regard to my cousin. From regretting the artifices and concealments of which I had been guilty, I began to regard them as having been prudent and wise. I blessed myself for having thus long delayed the disclosure of my intercourse with this foreigner; and determined,

henceforth, to act as if she had never been known to me ; to resume my visits to my cousin ; and find, in her ingenuous confidence, her artless affection, and the effusions of her pure and upright mind, a recompense for my recent disappointments.

You will ask if my passion for Clelia was thus easily annihilated ; if the lapse of a single day or week was sufficient to free me from shackles which are usually the strongest that nature has imposed upon youthful hearts ; if the extinction of desire thus rapidly followed the extinction of hope. This inference would be very wide of the truth, yet it was the inference which was drawn, at that time, by myself. My state was like that of a person who had rashly entangled himself in a fen, and, after panic fears and vehement struggles, has safely reached the firm ground. Exhausted by my efforts, I stood still to retrieve my composure and strength, and found a nameless de-

light in comparing my present safety with my past danger.

Such is the nature of passion ; and especially of this passion. Our views of things are perpetually varying ; and our feelings, conforming themselves to the change, are tranquil or stormy, torn by regrets or soaring into tranquillity. The first belief that succeeded to the rage of disappointment, was that of being free from the enchantments which had hitherto seduced me. I imagined that my love for Clelia was at end ; though my new emotions with respect to my cousin, were merely those of brotherly esteem, and such as to enable me, with sincerity and cheerfulness, to conform to those conditions which she imposed on our intercourse.

In this state of fleeting and delusive calm, I resolved to visit my cousin. Almost a fortnight had passed since I had seen her last. By indirect expressions, I had given her reason to suppose that this in-

terval would be passed at Calverton. She had remonstrated against so long an absence ; but my state of mind made my interviews with her irksome and embarrassing, and I readily seized any means of avoiding them. I pleaded some necessity for staying at this farm, and, in truth, the intervals between my visits to Miss Neville had been chiefly spent in that retreat. Sidney was still abroad, and Louisa was still with her friends on the bank of Schuylkill ; and to her, on the approach of evening, I repaired.

I found her pensively walking in an embowered alley of the garden. At my approach, pleasure took place of all other emotions, and she stretched out her hand : " Have you come at last, my dear cousin ! Let me first bid you welcome, and then demand from you the cause of this unfriendly absence."

I stammered out some poor apology, and promised more attention for the future.

“Nay,” she replied, “let your inclination guide you. Much as I love your company, its value must depend upon being cheerfully and willingly bestowed. And yet,” she continued, checking herself, and after a moment’s pause, “what a foolish saying was that! What a criminal effusion of selfishness and pride! I want your company much, and will solicit it, and claim it, even should you be averse or reluctant. It becomes me to vanquish that aversion, and contend with that reluctance. I have wished for you, and looked for you every evening this week. I have thought of you very much, and longed to communicate my thoughts. Go, sit down upon that bench, and I will tell you all that I have been thinking.”

Being seated, she took up a book that lay upon the bench, “See here, what I have been reading this afternoon. How hard beset will you think me, to find it necessary to resort to Mademoiselle Scu-

deri for entertainment. I found the volume in a garret. It was new to me. I never heard of it or saw it before, and my curiosity, I promise you, was highly gratified by the first score or two of pages. Look at it."

I took the book, and the first words I met with were, *Statira — Lysimachus — Perdicas*. — I closed the volume with a deep sigh.

She darted piercing eyes at me, and said, "Why that sorrowful air? Do you know the book?"

Full well, I answered. If I ever grow old and reflect upon the events that formed my character, I shall mark out this book as the most powerful of all the agents that made me what I am. If I am fickle and fantastic, not a moral or rational, or political being, but a thing of mere sex, this it was that fashioned me. I almost predict that I shall owe an ignominious life, and a shameful end to this book.

I again opened the volume, carelessly. A letter appeared between the leaves. It was superscribed "Louisa Calvert," and the hand writing was Sidney's. Something like jealousy and envy just then twitched me at the heart.

"Ah!" said she, "that is what I want you to read. It talks a great deal about you, and has told me something that has furnished its chief employment to my mind for these several days. It is that which has made me so impatient for your coming."

At these words my heart misgave me. "Is it possible," thought I, that this audacious intermeddler has betrayed me? But it cannot be. He is too far off to be acquainted with my movements."

I unfolded and read with some hurry and trepidation. All the while, the eyes of my companion were fixed upon me. They were usually languid and inexpressive, but now they had a strange and fascinating power. Full of conscious

purity and benevolent meaning, she seemed prepared to read my inmost soul, and yet, not as a censor or accuser, but as forgiving and compassionate.

Angel of a woman! Methinks I see thee at this moment! Thy virtue was sufficient to irradiate even thy homely features! But I must not call thee thus vividly to my remembrance. I must forget that cruel fate that made me the engine to destroy thee. All is now past; and my story will benefit others, though it plunges me again into anguish and repining. That persuasion shall support me in relating it; in exhibiting my guilt and folly in their genuine colours, and in doing justice to thy memory.

The first part of this letter related to himself, his own situation and employments; but presently he proceeded to a new topic, and continued in these words:

“You tell me that your time is chiefly spent without visitants; that Felix himself has deserted you; that he finds full

occupation for his time at Calverton ; and yet, you add, that you wonder what entertainment he can find in that unsightly and unwholesome spot, surrounded by black faces, parched fields, and long grass.

“ Your wonder is very natural ; but in this case it proceeds from your ignorance : Calverton, in truth, has no charms for your cousin. Few of his hours are spent there. They are much more agreeably devoted to a new acquaintance in the city. This is some lovely female from abroad, on whom our young friend has already bestowed his heart. What is the exact nature of their intercourse. I am not informed, but it is intimate and frequent. I greatly fear that the impetuosity of Calvert has carried him forward with too much speed, or with too little circumspection. I shall very shortly return and counsel him as a friend ; meanwhile, I would have you procure a meeting with him, extort from him some

hints respecting his genuine situation, and be that guardian of his virtue and happiness which your good sense, and your affection for him, so eminently qualify you to be."

During the perusal of this, my confusion was inexpressible. Shame at this detection of my imposture, and rage against the author of it, filled my heart almost to bursting. I threw the paper on the ground, and felt myself prompted to rush out of the garden. I turned my eyes from my cousin, and wished that some power would suddenly strike me deaf, that I might be screened from her reproaches. I expected nothing but the keenest rebukes, or the most contemptuous raillery. A pause of some minutes ensued. At length my cousin spoke.

"Why, my friend, are you thus disturbed? Have you been unfortunate? Is any disaster connected with your in-

tercourse with the person here alluded to? Let me comfort you ; let me counsel you. Tell me who she is, and what has passed between you ; perhaps I may assist you. If your happiness requires it, I will be your intercessor, and your advocate."

"Good heaven! Do you not then upbraid me? Do you not scorn me, drive me from your presence as a villain and betrayer?"

She shuddered at these words. She looked at me with eyes of terror and pity, and clasping her hands, "Have you, indeed, betrayed her? Have you debased yourself? Have you acted vilely by a woman and a stranger?"

I saw the nature of her error, and made haste to remove it. "No, no. She has received no injury from me. Her character, her innocence, are pure as they ever were. I have not betrayed or deceived her."

“Do you speak true? I beseech you, I conjure you, tell me the truth. Have you not injured her?”

I averred my innocence once more.

“Why, then, charge yourself with villainy, with deceit? Whom have you deceived?”

These words involved me in new perplexity. Was she not aware of my imposture with regard to herself? Had I not encouraged her fallacious inferences as to the state of my mind, and allowed her to ascribe appearances, which flowed from my affection for another—from fear and remorse, to emotions connected with my former pretensions to herself?

Observing my silence, she continued: “Have you been guilty of deceit? Whom have you deceived, and on what account could you persuade yourself to act so base a part?”

“Have I not concealed from you even the existence of Clelia Neville?”

“Alas! You did not deem me worthy

of your confidence. The interest that I take in your welfare, you rated too lightly. I have not succeeded in convincing you that I am worthy of your trust. You impute to me indifference, or selfishness, or envy, and hence have arisen your concealments. You imagined, perhaps, that I should be weak enough to derive unhappiness from your attachment to another, though I had, of my own accord, and against your inclination, unloosed all the ties that bound you to me ; though I had voluntarily given up my claim to your heart ; or you thought me wicked enough to hinder your success. You were reluctant, therefore, to make me unhappy, or to raise obstacles in the way of your wishes. Ought I then to blame you for concealment ? Ought I not rather to regret the failure of my own efforts to evince the consistency and rectitude of my sentiments, and to be more diligent for the future ?

“ Let me, then, persuade you to lay

aside disguise, and to confide in me. Depend upon my council and aid in any good cause. Who is the woman that Sidney speaks of? Do you love her? Is she worthy? What wishes or views do you form respecting her? How arose your acquaintance, and whither does it tend? Pr'ythee tell me the whole. Without scruple or evasion tell it me my more than brother, my friend!"

Was it possible to resist this bewitching frankness? To listen to such accents and not be brought, a penitent confessor, to her feet? The motives of my former conduct had indeed been various and mixed. Those which she just ascribed to me, had some part in swaying me to secrecy; but these were not the whole, nor the chief. I feared the imputation of caprice; my doubts of the ultimate decision of Clelia made me hold fast my former claim upon my cousin; a claim which my frank avowals, I imagined, would weaken or wholly take away. But

these were impulses of which her generous mind was not aware. She was prone to find in others, and especially me, a purity and self-oblivion like her own.

Should I now disclose to her the full extent of my versatile and sordid temper? Should I give her the pain of knowing the depth and number of my transgressions, of which I sincerely repented, and of which, with the usual temerity of inexperience, I ardently vowed never more to be guilty? Equally humiliating to me and useless to her, would be such confessions. If hitherto I had not merited her good opinion, hereafter I would do nothing to invalidate my claim.

In this state of mind, I adventured to recount to her my introduction to Miss Neville, and the incidents that had since occurred. My narrative was somewhat different from that which I have just related to you. Incidents were truly related, but falsehood almost spontaneously and insensibly insinuated itself into the

statement of my motives. The picture was incomplete, inasmuch as certain lineaments and shades were left out, but no spurious addition was admitted; no positively untrue assertion was made. How subtly modified are self delineations, by vanity, or shame, or misjudging interest! How invisibly faint are the boundaries of truth and falsehood!

She listened with great earnestness. When I brought my story to a close, with the confession of Clelia, that she was already a wife, my cousin started and shuddered. A pause of deep abstraction and silence ensued; at length she said:

“A wife! So long concealed her marriage from you! To mark the tendency of such intercourse, the progress of your feelings to love! To hear the confessions of that love without reluctance or sorrow! To sanction them, to meet them with corresponding confessions! To grant you those proofs of tenderness, which, in

a wife, are surely unwarranted and culpable ! Strange deportment !

“ To the accents of love, she listened with complacency. By offers of marriage, she was terrified. Surprise was the master-passion for a time. Why should she be surprised ? Did she imagine you acquainted with her true state ? And could she cheerfully receive offices of tenderness from one whom she knew to be apprised of her marriage ? What rashness ! What blindness to consequences !

“ You say that she followed her aunt to America ; that her coming was unexpected and unwelcome. It must, then, have been criminal, or, at least, indiscreet and rash. Could she have fled from her husband ? Perilous, indeed, my brother, has been your situation. Let this event contribute to inspire you with caution. Be grateful to that succouring Providence which has saved you from

ruin; and be, for the future, less prone to confide in the illusions of beauty, and the flattery of first impressions. What have you resolved to do? I hope this has been the last interview."

I assured her that it was so, and that I had unalterably determined never to see the foreigner again. She expressed the utmost satisfaction at this promise, and urged various considerations to strengthen my adherence to it. That evening was spent in her company, and I did not return to the city till next day.

When I retired to rest, my meditations were active and vivid. The events of this evening had given a new soul to my frame. I caught the sweet whispers of self-approbation, and had a glimpse of that felicity which is a stranger to foreboding and remorse. I admired the means by which this transition was effected, and contemplated my cousin's conduct with astonishment and reverence. Judging of others by myself, I

had not preconceived the possibility of such sentiments and such deportment. It seemed to be a different person to whom I had been introduced; and my earliest impressions with regard to her, those which existed before our first meeting, and which were generated by fancy upon rumour, seemed to be revived. My cousin's homely features and diminutive form gave place to symmetry and dignity, and I wondered at myself for having so long overlooked her loveliness.

Next day, after promising to repeat my visit very speedily, I parted from her, and returned to my lodgings in the city. For a time, I was sensible of no decay of my newly acquired zeal. I reviewed late incidents with satisfaction and tranquillity. My fancy was engrossed by the looks and words of my cousin. Gradually, however, my attention reverted to the topics of our late conversation; and these recalled to my view Clelia and her train of charms.

I mused upon the progress of our acquaintance, and the delight which she seemed to receive from my discourse : and the fatal disclosure of her marriage now occurred to me, attended with all the indications of grief which were visible on that occasion. From an object of indignation she insensibly appeared before me as entitled to compassion. That she had eloped from her husband, was sufficiently apparent ; but it did not appear that she had fled with a seducer : on the contrary, she had sought protection in the arms of an affectionate and virtuous aunt, whose grief might have been excited, not by the crimes, but by the misfortunes of her niece ; and who had, surely, afforded some proof of her paternal confidence and love, by bequeathing to her so large a property. Besides, what reprehensible or suspicious conduct had been discovered in Clelia since her arrival on these shores ? The friends of Mrs. Keith were her friends. Her mode of life was a

chaste seclusion, unapproached by any whose intercourse might contaminate her purity. She was free, not from actual degradation merely, but from slander and suspicion. Were not these circumstances of some weight in the scale?

True it is, that she is married; yet she has confessed her love for me, and is that so heinous an offence? If it may claim to be forgiven, surely that claim may be made with most reason on him who is the object of her love. Persecution and resentment, from any quarter, may be undeserved; but from him to whom her heart is devoted, and for whose sake her guilt, if any guilt exist, has been contracted, it would be, in an uncommon degree, barbarous and perverse. The motives of her flight may possibly have been such as to be excused, if not justified, by a candid arbiter; and why should I decide upon these motives, and on the equity of her conduct, before I am acquainted with them?"

I had withdrawn from our last interview in rage. Was this the treatment she had merited? What was her crime in suppressing the mention of that which possibly she imagined to be known to me already? My conduct was precipitate and cruel, but it could not now be repaired. I had vowed never to see her more. My promise to Louisa was sacred, and must be preserved.

With these reasonings passing through my mind, I reached home. I had scarcely entered the house, when a letter was presented to me by my landlord. I started when I saw that the superscription was in the same hand with that in which the billet formerly received, was written. So! said I, a letter from Clelia herself! This is an evil omen. I hastily opened, and read as follows:

“To Felix Calvert.

“You left me in anger and contempt. What has happened to lessen me in your

esteem? I deserve nothing but your pity. I demand your pity.

“Your proposal astonished and grieved me. It astonished me because I had good reason to believe you acquainted with my situation, and because it was inconsistent with those opinions you had previously avowed. You taught me to believe that you could love me with the same affection with which you could love a friend of your own sex.

“I am grieved to find you a stranger to my real condition. Had I supposed that ignorance, I should long ago have hastened to remove it. I beseech you, afford me the opportunity of justifying my conduct. You know me merely as a fugitive from my husband and my country, and you impute to me all that is criminal and odious; but the true reasons of my actions will show you that I am not without excuse. I request one last interview, that I may lay before you these reasons.

“ I invite you not to a renewal of intercourse. Neither my happiness nor yours will permit that. I would see you once more, that I may convince my benefactor that I am not altogether so unworthy as he thinks me ; but, thenceforth, we must part for ever.

“ I will expect you at the customary hour this evening. C. N.”

Was this summons to be obeyed? Compliance was but just. An invitation to a single interview, for a purpose like this, was innocent and laudable. What but good could flow from compliance? I had promised my cousin not to visit Miss Neville (for so I will continue to call her ;) but she, herself, would readily absolve me from this promise, were she apprised of the purpose of the desired interview. I would go.

My conjecture had been right. She supposed me acquainted with her marriage ; yet, how could that knowledge have been obtained ? Perhaps from her

aunt's friends, with whom I might naturally be imagined to have some intercourse.

I paid my visit at the appointed hour. I found her, as usual when the evening was serene, in the garden. She received me with some marks of confusion and distress. As I approached the house, my placidness and courage began to yield place to dejection and restlessness. These increased on entering the alcove, where so many pleasurable moments had passed; and the sight of her pale hue and downcast eyes, completed the subversion of my fortitude. My sensations on leaving her, at the former interview, returned upon me with scarcely less force.

I did not speak. I did not seat myself beside her, but opposite. I folded my hands upon my breast, and waited, mournfully, for what communications she should please to make. After some pause, she said, in a tremulous tone :

“ I have invited you hither, without

knowing whether you had any desire for the interview. I have offered to communicate the knowledge of events, which, perhaps, are to you indifferent. What I tell you, may only, in a slight degree, lessen your disapprobation; but I would fain restore myself to the esteem of one who has saved my life. I would elude the charge of having seduced your affections, by appearances of being willing to accept them, without the violation of my duty.

“It is true, alas! that I am married; but the man who claims my person, has no claim upon my esteem or my love. I have fled from his house, because it was a scene of depravity and tyranny. I have exercised no other liberty than that of forbearing intercourse with a wretch polluted by the blackest guilt. To withdraw from his power, to regard him with aversion instead of love, was no crime. To feel gratitude for real services; to give esteem, confidence, and love to an-

other who deserves it, is consistent with every duty to my husband; and I have fostered these emotions towards you without remorse.

“ My father was a banker of Dublin. My mother died a few hours after my birth, and left me the only consolation of my father. My early years were spent without any remarkable occurrence. At the age of fourteen I was permitted to take up my abode with my father's sister, Mrs. Keith, who, at that period, came from America, and was left lonely and disconsolate, by the death of her husband. She adopted, and treated me as her own, and I was not wanting in filial affection and gratitude.

“ I had passed my eighteenth year, not without many suitors. None of them were such as obtained, at once, my own approbation, and that of my two parents: and their concurrence, as well as that of my own heart, was an indispensable condition of success. I was an only child,

and the heiress of both my father and his sister, and both were deemed rich. Hence there was no want of amorous protestors, and disinterested wooers; but I erected a standard, by which to judge of their sincerity, that none of them could endure.

“At length one was introduced to me, by name Belgrave. His family was ancient, and much superior in dignity to mine. He was possessed of great fortunes, which he spent with magnificence, but without visible profusion. He was in the bloom of youth, graceful, elegant, insinuating. He had received the usual education, and spent the usual time in foreign countries, from which he had returned, with all that speciousness and gloss about him, which converse, on equal terms, with the great and the gay, are adapted to produce.

“He quickly selected me for the object of his devotion, and employed every means of gaining my esteem. He con-

formed to all my pursuits and opinions ; applauded and condemned according to the example which I set him, and made himself, as nearly as possible, a copy of that model which my fancy had most delighted to contemplate.

“ His efforts were in some degree successful. His manners and his general conduct were such as I readily and ardently approved. His external circumstances were liable to no exception ; but still there was a nameless something in his countenance and carriage, which I could not prevail upon my heart to love. When called upon to state the grounds of my aversion, I could mention no strain of discourse, no mode of conduct which I disapproved. His tongue was fluent, and always prodigal of generous feelings, and heroic ardours ; his features were flexible and animated ; and yet the look of true benevolence, an eye, ingenuous and benignant, were never to be found by me. Doubts, misgivings,

proneness to shrink, to cover up my feelings, as from one incapable of sharing in them, always swayed me in his presence, and when my attention was fixed upon his face. They were instinctive and inexplicable. I could not clearly define them to another, and produce in another the same emotions with regard to him.

“After a due period of assiduity he besought my hand. It was refused. His humiliation and grief were unaffected, but wrought no change in my resolutions. My aunt and my father were engaged as his advocates. I could convince neither of them of the propriety of my objections. In their eyes, my scruples appeared absurd and capricious. They were hearkened to with disgust, and censured with asperity. Solicitations and commands, menaces of separation and displeasure, were liberally employed to vanquish what was called my infatuation and my folly.

“Hitherto I had known little but hap-

piness. My aunt's and my father's approbation and love, had amply compensated me for the few ills and privations which had fallen to my lot; but these consolations were now withdrawn. I revered their judgments; but their arguments, while they taught me to mistrust my own impressions, did not weaken these impressions, or prevent me from sinking into grief, at the prospect of becoming the wife of Belgrave.

“This state of fluctuation continued for several months. Belgrave was indefatigable in his importunities, in his appeals to my compassion, and my reason, in his vows of eternal gratitude, and boundless devotion; and my parents were no less urgent in contending with scruples, which they deemed fantastic, ridiculous and criminal.

“I will not dwell upon the feelings with which I endured this conflict. They cannot be described. They cannot be conceived but by one who

with gratitude and fervour like mine, was devoted to a revered parent, and idolised the penetration and generosity of a friend. Their rebukes became daily more severe, and my fainting courage became every day more unequal to resistance. My father, at length, disclosed obligations under which Belgrave had laid him, and which, as they had saved him from bankruptcy, had preserved me from indigence. These demanded every grateful service; and my refusal to become Belgrave's wife, would offend my father and my aunt beyond forgiveness. Subdued, at length, I resigned myself to my fate.

"Too soon were the forebodings of my fears realized. Those appearances were laid aside which he had deemed necessary for the attainment of his purposes. Cohabiting with him, I became acquainted with transactions and scenes, which, at a distance, could not possibly have been suspected. They cannot be

thought of without horror. They cannot be related.

“My detection of the truth was gradual. Quickly did indifference and inattention succeed to insinuation and warmth; but these slowly gave way to peevishness, impatience, and, at length, to undisguised disgust. Momentary returns to kindness became fewer. Bursts of contempt and resentment became more frequent. Hasty intimations that my pride and my obstinacy, in so long resisting his entreaties, merited punishment, and that his perseverance was dictated by a desire of revenge, sometimes escaped him.

“This vengeance he proceeded to inflict, by treating me with rudeness and contempt; by thwarting all my most trifling wishes; by forbidding his servants to bear my messages, or execute my orders; by affronting my friends and visitors; by interrupting me in my favourite employments of music and reading, or

depriving me of the means of pursuing them. My father was shortly taken away by a sudden death, and his property, of course, devolved upon Belgrave. This property enlarged his gratifications, but contributed, in no degree, to my comfort or my deliverance from mistreatment; nor did he strive to conceal from me that my wealth had been his great inducement to seek my favour, and that the pecuniary assistance which he had given to my father, was merely designed to benefit himself, and to preserve, unimpaired, that fortune which he expected would one day come into his own hands.

“My husband’s presence, his house, became loathsome and intolerable. I flew to my only comforter, my aunt. I declared my desperate resolution never more to return to his house; to brave the contumelies of the world, which would never believe the wrongs which I had endured, and which, indeed, would

never know the most odious of these wrongs.

“She contended with my despair. She joined with me in my abhorrence of Belgrave, but she endeavoured to reconcile me to my fate ; to wean me from reliance on the world’s opinion and the world’s goods ; to seek, in religion, a balm to my wounded spirit, and a basis for hope which the depravity of those around me could never shake.

“My aunt’s exhortations were always earnest and pathetic to a degree that never failed to conquer my despair, at least, for a time. Her lessons instilled into me patience, at least, to sustain the miseries of my condition. I consented to return to an habitation polluted by abominable crimes ; to hush my murmurs, and to meet the wretch who called himself my husband, without invectives.

“My aunt, shortly after, thought it necessary to return to America. She was the only friend whom, in spite of

the tyranny and malice of Belgrave, I had preserved. It was she only whose accents had any power to inspire me with fortitude. Her counsels and admonitions were perpetually necessary, and in her bosom I poured my sorrows, and found comfort. She was now going to desert me. She would pass into a distant world, from which she designed never to return. All useful intercourse between us would be cut off.

“I endeavoured to persuade her to relinquish her scheme, and urged the necessity of her presence to prevent me from committing some fatal act of despair or resentment. She resisted my entreaties, and showed me the weakness of dependence on a fellow creature, whom so many accidents might snatch away from this state of existence. She urged anew the duty of seeking strength from a higher source ; and, after many efforts on my side, and many arguments on her’s, I consented, with a bleeding

heart, to her departure, and to the loss of the only comfort that remained to me.

“ I will not dwell upon the incidents that ensued her departure. My husband’s conduct became more atrocious than ever. My life became more burthensome. My customary source of fortitude was withdrawn. I was overwhelmed with a consciousness of solitude and wretchedness. I endeavoured, in vain, to practise the lessons of resignation and devotion which my aunt had taught me. I looked after my beloved friend with unspeakable longings. My fancy accompanied her across the inhospitable ocean, and took up its abode with her on the shores of this new world. This employment possessed a strange power of delighting and tormenting me. I pursued it incessantly by night and by day. I loved to sleep, for my dreams were sure to unite me with my absent friend, and to annihilate that dreary interval by which we were severed from

each other. I awoke to sorrow; to lament that the scene was visionary and fleeting.

“By perpetually musing on the forlornness of my condition, the inquiry was gradually suggested, is it without remedy? Has my friend gone whither it is impossible to follow her? The ocean is passable by me as well as by her. What should hinder me from pursuing the same track? from seeking deliverance from the tyranny under which I now suffer, by flying to a distant land.

“This thought had not now occurred for the first time. When my aunt’s voyage had first been mentioned, my heart involuntarily exclaimed, O! that I could be her companion; that I could fly from my country for ever, from the power of my bitterest enemy, and the most profligate of men, and hide my head in a remote land of tranquillity and innocence! This desire I never dared to utter, and I made haste to stifle so flattering a wish.

“ To a scheme like this, I knew that my aunt would never consent ; that to know that it was harboured for a moment in my bosom, would give her exquisite pain, by showing her the futility of all her efforts to convince me of my sacred duty and irrevocable obligations. Now this scheme was anew suggested to my thoughts with more attractions than ever. The more I revolved it, the more practicable and eligible it appeared.

“ What,” said I, “ are the impediments that hinder me ? Cannot I withdraw from this habitation and this city, without exciting my husband’s opposition ? He little suspects that my despair could prompt me to an action like this. He will, therefore, employ no precautions against it. If I conceal my name, assume a different and plainer garb, and retire to some obscure sea port in the north, I may embark for America without molestation ; and my place of refuge will never be suspected by those whom I leave behind.

“ My flight will be regarded by Belgrave with more pleasure than anger. He will not know whither I have fled. He will suppose me lost in obscurity and indigence, and his savage heart will derive satisfaction from reflecting on the humiliations and embarrassments to which he may imagine me subjected. Instead of diligently pursuing my footsteps, and reclaiming possession of my person, he will be contented with my property, and rejoice at being freed from that restraint which my presence could not fail, in some degree, to produce.

“ He may propagate some tale injurious to my honour, and my reputation may be blasted ; but, free as I am from reproach, and notorious as my husband’s ✓ vices have at length become, what have I to fear from his aspersions ? On what ground has my conduct afforded him the possibility of building slanderous insinuations ? And will he not be deterred by the uncertainty of my condition, and

the likelihood, therefore, that I live to confute his falshoods, and to avenge my injuries, by unfolding to the world those enormities which would not only cover him with infamy, but expose to danger his liberty, and even his life ?

“ My friend will be grieved at my conduct ; but, surely, if it cannot be justified, it is yet not without excuse. Her wisdom will reconcile her to an event which cannot be recalled, and she will not refuse me her protection and her love.

“ This scheme, after many difficulties and delays, was carried into execution. I escaped from Dublin without warning any human creature of my design, and without leaving behind me any traces of my flight. After a tempestuous voyage, I arrived in this city. Having found my aunt’s habitation, I burst into her presence, and throwing myself into her arms, poured forth tears of joy and shame.

“ My maternal friend easily forgave the errors of her child, when it was no

longer in her power to prevent them ; but her wisdom could not reconcile her to an act which she deemed a violation of the most sacred duty. Long have I wept over her grave, and my grief has been embittered by the thought that my misconduct contributed to cloud the evening of her life, and, perhaps, to hasten that event which has robbed me of a guide, a protector, and a parent.

“I have no correspondence with my native country. I know not the condition of Belgrave, or the effects which my disappearance has produced upon him or upon others. I have had no desire but to live unmolested and in privacy ; in the indulgence of mournful recollections, and in the moderate use of that liberty and those enjoyments which are within my reach, and which are innocent.”

Here the narrator paused. I had listened with the deepest interest. I continued to listen. I readily acquitted her of all blame for leaving her country ;

but how were these events likely to be known to me, when it had probably been her earnest wish to hide them from all mankind, and when, indeed, her own silence on the subject of her own adventures, had never been broken?

I did not conceal from her these thoughts. Her countenance betrayed embarrassment and perplexity. She hesitated to answer me, and, at length, said:

“It is true. I imagined you to be acquainted with my condition. I found in you one whom I wish to call my friend, because my unhappy situation will not allow any nearer claim. I am content to be the object of your fraternal love: but this is not sufficient for your happiness. I must, therefore, consent to lose the pleasures and advantages of your society; but I thought it due to myself to explain the reasons of a conduct which to you might appear culpable.

“I have suppressed the mention of my own misfortunes, at first, because the

subject is painful to remembrance ; because suitable occasions for the mention of them never occurred ; because your curiosity never appeared to be awakened with regard to them ; and you never, even indirectly, and in our most confidential moments, questioned me as to my former or actual condition."

"But that deportment," replied I, eyeing her steadfastly, "might arise from diffidence or false delicacy ; from a thousand causes different from my knowledge of your true condition. Besides, how was I to obtain that knowledge ? Who was there, beyond these walls, able to communicate it, and from whom was I likely, in my present situation, to obtain it ? I have told you that I am nearly a stranger in this city ; that there is none of its inhabitants but you with whom I have frequent or friendly intercourse."

Her embarrassment was increased by the steadfastness of my scrutiny. She answered, "I thought you knew it. It

was vague conjecture, and fallacious, as the event has now proved. Perhaps I may have found such place in your esteem that you will credit my assertion without knowing the grounds of my opinion. I will not hide from you the existence of such grounds, which, at the same time, I cannot now disclose to you. The time will, perhaps, come, when the disclosure may be possible. Now it is not."

I renewed my questions, but she repelled them in the same manner. To tell her reasons for supposing me more knowing, in relation to her, than I was, was not fit for this time. The consequences of this error were not more to be lamented for my sake than for her's. It had deprived her of a friend.

Why do you speak thus? Why must this discovery raise an insuperable bar between us? Why should we not interchange our feelings and ideas as formerly?

She cast at me looks of surprise, min-

gled with affection, "Have I not betrayed you? Have I not misled you by false pretences, by appearances which did not correspond with truth? Is not this the light in which I am regarded by you?"

"Not if I confide in your assertions that you meant not to deceive me; that you imagined me aware of that obstacle which forbade any intercourse but that of friendship between us?"

Her eyes sparkled with delight at these words. "And do you trust me? Do you confide in me? Will you still be my friend? Will you add another and a greater benefit to that which you bestowed on me in saving my life, by allowing me the affections, the caresses, and the counsels of a brother?"

Such looks and tones accompanied these words, that I yielded my assent, not coldly or reluctantly, but with undisguised and immeasurable fervency.

"I am a forlorn girl," she resumed.

"I am an exile and a recluse. I have been the victim of imposture and cruelty. I desire not to mix with the world, or to disclose my condition. I have resumed my father's name, and disown the condition of a wife. What expedient the malice of Belgrave may employ to hurt my reputation, or regain his power over my person I know not; but I know that my safety depends upon his ignorance of my retreat. My heart is formed for all the tender sympathies of nature. My soul melts when the images of wife and mother occur strongly to my fancy; and I sink into repining at the hardness of my destiny which has cut me off from all these duties and enjoyments.

"Since I have known you, my regrets are less painful. I love to paint myself as owing life and all its enjoyments to your hand. I love that boundless gratitude which swells my heart at the sight of you, and which your estimable qua-

lities have converted into affection and esteem. My love for you is tender ; but that love demands nothing but your affection, your society, and your happiness. On my own account, I scarcely regret those bars which hinder you from standing in any nearer relation to me. How happy shall I be, if there be no reason to regret it upon your account ; if you can cheerfully consent to be my friend : Can you consent ?”

“ Cheerfully !”

At that moment, and while listening to such accents, it was impossible not to repeat my concurrence. For some hours, my cousin was forgotten. My indignation was dismissed. My horror at the name of wife, my aversion to restraint, was no longer felt. I regarded my companion as a martyr to an ill-fated marriage. Her misfortunes, her desolate condition, her dependence upon me for happiness, and the obstacles to our union,

not arising, as in my cousin's case, from her own perverseness, but from causes whose existence was as deeply deplored by herself as by me, added to the enchantments of her features and the graces of her demeanour, made me willingly renew my homage at this shrine.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN the interview was at an end, I began to review these incidents with more sobriety. I was struck with wonder at the difference between the consequences of this meeting and those which I had previously imagined would flow from it; at the rapid transitions which my feelings had undergone from indignation and horror, to complacency and even rapture. Is there a human heart, said I, fashioned like mine; susceptible of such extremes; shifting guises and forms with such celerity, and delivering itself up to such opposite emotions within the same short period? And what is now to be done?

I promised my cousin never to repeat my visit to Miss Neville. Ten hours have scarcely passed since the promise was made, yet I have paid this interdicted visit, and have promised to be more assiduous in my attentions than ever! Will this disobedience be excused by my cousin? Shall I not disclose all that has passed? And will not Clelia be regarded by her as worthy of affection and pity?

I acquiesced in this resolution; yet I was not in haste to execute it. My hours of leisure I felt most disposed to devote to Miss Neville. The distance from my lodgings was less, and the attractions of her company far more powerful. I will see my cousin, I said, shortly, but not to-night. To-morrow will be time enough. When the morrow arrived, my visit was again postponed. I readily admitted a stormy atmosphere to plead my excuse; and even the likelihood of rain was sufficient to reconcile me to delay.

Thus day after day elapsed; new impediments arose in my way to the Wallaces'; and apology for absence became, at once, more necessary and more difficult.

My intercourse with Clelia was such as to intoxicate my juvenile feelings, and to shut out all foreign images. No pair of tongues were ever more voluble when they were set at liberty; and yet, on my part, I never made my own history the theme of my discourse. I loved to paint my visions of fancy; the images collected from books: but, chiefly, I was fond of questioning my friend in relation to her past life, and to the formation and progress of her sentiments. On this subject she delighted to dwell. Her memory appeared to retain all the impressions of the past. The terms of every interesting dialogue; the looks, gestures, and minutest incidents accompanying it; every hue of the quickest

and most mutable feeling, were exhibited with all the graces of a lucid elocution.

These topics were not of an inexhaustible kind. They were more acceptable to me than any other. Others were excluded, not so much from any antipathy conceived against them, as because the time was more delightfully engrossed by these.

One evening, entering with my usual carelessness, I discovered Miss Neville in her drawing-room, earnestly contemplating some object which she held in her hand. Her attention was so much absorbed by this object, that she did not notice me till I touched her elbow. She started, thrust something into her bosom, and averted from my eyes a face suffused with the deepest crimson.

“What,” said I, “have I caught you? Why is that something so hastily thrust out of sight?”

She stammered out the usual evasions

of "nothing ; nothing at all ; a matter of no consequence," and made strong efforts to regain her composure.

I grew importunate. A sort of vague suspicion darted through my mind, and whispered me that this was a picture : a picture which was not to be shewn to me, though proper to be gazed at when alone. I ceased to importune. I allowed her to change the conversation ; but disquietude rankled in my heart, and I suffered the discourse to languish.

She quickly perceived the cloud upon my brow, and asked, tenderly, the cause:

"What is that, I answered, which you put into your bosom?" Her confusion returned, and my anxieties increased. She refused to produce it. She was too honest to mislead me by direct assertions, but she besought me to excuse her.

"Readily," said I, gravely, "I excuse you from performing what will give you pain."

She again attempted to engage me in

sprightly talk, but my heart was pained. The gloom upon my countenance became more deep. I even made a motion as if I would go away.

“ My friend, what is the matter with you? Why this sedateness, this reserve?”

“ It is your reserve that occasions mine. You will not tell me what you put into your bosom.”

“ Must you know?”

“ If it be not disclosed, I shall go away less happy than when I came.”

After visible embarrassment and struggle, she drew it forth. It was, indeed, a picture. My heart sunk still lower. I had scarcely courage to examine it. What was my surprise and pleasure when, on glancing at it, I beheld—my own image.

“ And what need was there of concealing this?” said I. “ How could I fail to derive pleasure from this proof of your attachment?”

By this time she had recovered her tranquillity. “ It was mere folly, I own.

I am a wayward creature ; but your kindness will forgive me. In time, I shall become more reasonable and consistent. I have just been altering it."

"Altering it?"

"Yes : when first taken, I committed some egregious mistakes. How I could fall into them, is incomprehensible. I thought I had obtained a perfect image ; but, on a closer scrutiny, I found I had strayed wide from the true proportions. Your hair is a shade darker than at first sight, and your eyes, instead of being of an heavenly blue, are of an hazel cast."

"Strange mistakes, indeed, said I. But why did you not order me to sit while you copied my real face?"

"There is reason for that," she replied, casting down her eyes and blushing with bewitching significance.

"Certainly ; but what was the reason?"

Half sportively, "I will not tell you. That is still to be a secret. The time will be, I hope, when that and many

other kindred mysteries will show themselves without disguise. Let it content you that the face is your's, and that I wear it here, within these folds, and have worn it. Do you know how I have been employed to-day?"

"No."

"I have been writing a history—a secret history. Though I have prated so much about myself, I have not told you all. I cannot utter every thing, and what I cannot, I have consigned to the pen. You know nothing yet of my secret history. That will be a feast for you which I mean shortly to set before you."

"Pr'ythee make haste, then; I shall have no rest while a secret remains. But who are the actors in these mysteries?"

"Myself, to be sure, and another."

"What other?"

She cast most expressive looks at me, yet I could not satisfactorily interpret them: "Cannot you guess?"

"I should hope that in a drama where two characters only are exhibited, and you were one, that I should be the other."

"You have guessed aright. And yet you know me not. I was masqued. But what am I doing? You will rifle my box of secrets before I am aware. I am telling you what I meant you should read. O! let me ask you how came that scar upon your left cheek?"

In leaping from a hay mow, I fell and struck my head against the edge of a mattock that lay concealed beneath a wisp of straw."

"When did that happen?"

"In my childhood."

She expressed much surprise. "In your childhood? And has it always been thus?"

"Always since my tenth year."

She suddenly became thoughtful, but presently resumed her sprightliness: "This, likewise, was omitted in your first portrait, which is very strange.

Methinks the mark is sufficiently conspicuous."

"At our very first interview this scar was noticed by you, so that I conclude my portrait was taken before we met in this house."

This hint was followed by deep confusion; "Talk no more of the portrait. I was an unskilful artist, it is true."

She now called away her own thoughts and mine to some other topic, and I did not muse on these occurrences till we had parted. It was then that her secret history, her masquerade, the portrait formed previous to my knowledge of her, and concealed from me with such solicitude, occurred to my thoughts. My reflections were unattended by pain. They set me to conjecturing what had passed between her escape from the house in flames, till our actual meeting. I had spent that interval chiefly in the city, and many occasions might be conceived on which a glimpse of me might

have been afforded her. These surmises were flattering to my vanity, and showed the deep impression which gratitude had made upon her.

On my return home, I found a billet from my cousin, couched in these words:

“Why do you forget your promise? I want to see you. Come to me to-morrow morning, and make amends for this forgetfulness or negligence. I shall fully expect to see you, so that you must not disappoint me.”

This billet threw me into some perplexity. I was conscious how culpable I had been, and was at a loss what apology to make. I could not, however, hesitate to comply, and went next morning to Wallace's. My cousin received me with her usual frankness and affection, and, after a few minutes conversation, in which her friend bore a part, she invited me to walk with her. The air with which this invitation was made, convinced me that something extraordinary

engrossed her thoughts. This belief increased my embarrassments.

After a few turns in the garden, and when we appeared at a sufficient distance from interruption, she said with great earnestness, and, looking at me steadfastly, "Sidney returned home last week, and spent yesterday here. He tells me that you visit Clelia Neville frequently. You told me, when I saw you last, that you designed to have no more intercourse with that person. What has happened to change this resolution?"

I was silent. She noticed my embarrassment, and resumed, in a tone of irresistible tenderness, "Let not my brother deem me selfish and impertinent. My inquiries are dictated by regard for your welfare. That welfare I believe to be in some danger. Forgive me, then, for taking you thus to task. You have overlooked your promise to me, but that promise was exacted not merely or chiefly to gratify myself, but to screen you from

the most formidable danger which can assail your youth. Far am I from intending to upbraid you for any negligence of me. I have, of my own accord, given up my claims upon your faith; and cannot wonder that beauty, gracefulness, intelligence, and sensibility, far superior to what I possess, have enchanted you in another. For this you are not to blame. You are not to blame for any thing; least of all for withholding your confidence from me, and declining to seek my advice. As soon as I can thoroughly convince you that my regard for you is void of selfishness and jealousy, this reserve will disappear, and I will convince you of it.

“ You are the son of my mother. She who saved me from indigence and suffering, who took me to her home and her bosom, and gave me all the happiness that I possess, lives in your form, in your features, in your voice. When you are present, she is always before me. You

are the pride and the hope of her life. shall I not love you, then, for her sake?

“But that love is small in proportion to that which I bear you for your own sake. My woman’s heart is yours. My very soul reposes in your bosom. I know no happiness but as you are happy. Are the transports of a wife and a mother not to be found in your arms? Are your affections to be given to another? It is well. I unobtrusively acquiesce. I adopt that other for my substitute. I am anxious, only, that she may merit your devotion. To see you betrayed, connected with a specious impostor, with a faithless wanton, would break my heart; indeed it would.

“You are mine,” she continued, putting her arm round my neck, and in a tone of new sweetness, “you are mine, and I will not part with you but to one that well deserves the precious gift. Beloved Felix! Clelia Neville deserves you not.”

What were my feelings during this address? My heart was fickle and inconstant, but yet not callous. Tears rushed to my eyes. I was subdued. I was torn with remorse for my past insensibility to such excellence. I said, "I have wronged you. Henceforth I put my faith in your hands. Direct me as you please. I will worship and obey you as my better angel."

"That is a good youth; but be not prodigal of promises. Show your sincerity by disclosing your feelings and motives. Give me a just account of what has happened during your absence. Why, on the evening of the very day we parted, did you go to Miss Neville? Why have so many evenings since been spent with her? From twilight to ten, twelve, and even two o'clock? And why, on leaving this enchantress, instead of seeking your repose, have you rambled to Schuylkill, and descried the dawn from the verge of Quarry hill?"

I started. "How came you acquainted with these incidents?"

"They came to me from Sidney, who gained them from a friend who lives not far from Miss Neville's."

Sidney and his friend, thought I, are officious, and had better be employed about their own concerns. I suppressed these thoughts, and produced the letter which I had received from Clelia. "There, said I, was my inducement to renew my visits."

She perused the letter. I then recounted the substance of Clelia's narrative. I mentioned the compassion which this story had excited, and my readiness to maintain a friendly intercourse with her. Nothing had since passed unsuitable to those duties which were incumbent on her as a wife. I regarded her as such, and was not ashamed to confess that I delighted in her company. I saw nothing in this intercourse that ought to offend the most scrupulous.

My cousin's eye was full of suspicion and uneasiness. After a pause she said, "She once confessed that she loved you?"

"She did."

"Has she retracted that confession?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"She repeats still that she loves you?"

"She does not deny it."

"She is not particularly circumspect—reserved?"

"Certainly she is; as much as she ought to be."

"More so than before the discovery of her marriage? Than when she demeaned herself as lovers are used to do?"

"Not more so. In that respect I see no difference."

"When you offer—she does not decline; she does not shrink from your caresses? She does not manifest displeasure?"

"No; she is as affectionate in her deportment as you are."

"But I am your sister. I am more

than your sister. I am not a wife. Has she never wept at those ties which oblige her to treat you merely as a friend? Has she never painted the felicity attendant on indissoluble union with you, and maligned the power which forbids it?"

I could not deny that she had.

"Have you never concurred with her wishes and her tears? Have you never sought relief from impatience and dejection in reflecting that every man must die? That Belgrave's vices will probably expedite his death, and that then you may seek the hand of this woman without a crime?"

"It is true."

"Do not these fits of impatience increase in frequency and obstinacy?"

"I cannot tell. They are more easily removed at one time than at another."

"At moments when your feelings are most active, does not a momentary doubt insinuate itself as to the validity of that bond which inthrals your Clelia to an-

other? It was not strong enough to bind her affections and person to a ruffian. It hindered her not from imbibing and avowing an attachment to one more worthy, and whose heart gives her all its treasures in return. Why, then, (do you not sometimes ask) should it hinder her from giving the natural proofs of that attachment? Conjugal duty, it seems, has not prevented her withdrawing from Belgrave her love, her confidence, and her society. It has not hindered her from bestowing all these upon another. Having given thus much, the seal surely is broken, and duty will permit her to give all. Have not such reveries as these sometimes, however rarely, fluctuated in your thoughts, and rendered you insensible to midnight damps?"

I was silent.

"Have not soliloquies escaped you, at moments when memory was most full of the blandishments and graces of this friend, in which a hearer would distin-

guish such sounds as 'Unnatural restraints! Arbitrary institutions! Capricious scruples!' tell me, honestly, Felix."

I could not speak.

"But these were merely creatures of a fancy, which, in being ever busy in creation, and always hovering round the image of this girl, must be expected to produce every shape, and to sport with every possible phantom. These images are fleeting. They are chastised and banished by wiser thoughts, which show you that the effusions of the heart, the interchange of sentiments, and the acceptance and return of chaste caresses, are all that is of lasting value, even in wedlock. With these you resolve to be content, and to wait till circumstances arise that will sanction a closer intimacy."

"There," said I, with eagerness, "you do me justice."

"And yet—how often does that officious phrase 'and yet,' interfere to break this equable tenor, to call up a regretful

sigh?—‘And yet it is a pity. Life is wasted in delays. Belgrave may survive a half-century.’ How often, at the conclusion of an interview, has a contempt of remote consequences, a faith in concealment, indignation at imaginary restraints, and the unjust obloquy of mankind, insensibly gained the upper place in your mind! How often have you noted the repose of nature, the security of solitude, and whispered in her ear, ‘why must we part? Why should we be separated an hour; and why should this hour sever us?’ And do you not still hear that sweet voice, which sighingly and whisperingly answers, alas! it must be so!”

I was overpowered with confusion. I shuddered as if a witness had really been present at our interviews. I was astonished and abashed at so faithful a picture.

“I forgive your silence,” resumed my monitress. “You need not answer me.

I see that my conjectures are true. Such must ever be the reveries of one young as you, with principles versatile, ungrounded in religion, or on that morality which is the growth of experience. And the tendency of these things, if not to undermine your virtue, to make you dissolute and callous to reproach, yet, to unnerve your courage, to enfeeble all your energies, to divert your attention from useful knowledge, the service of your friends and your country, you do not see!

“Clelia has hitherto been, in your opinion, blameless. She has been the victim of treachery and cruelty. She fled from the mistreatment of a monster. She stands in need, and she is deserving of a friend. Are not these your opinions?”

“They are.”

“And on what evidence are they built?”

I was disconcerted, and at a loss for

an answer. At length I said, "I have no evidence but her own assertion. I have told you the story which I heard from her."

"And is that evidence sufficient? How numberless and irresistible are the inducements to conceal what, if known, would redound to our shame? How easy to disguise the real motives of our conduct! Belgrave may have been the inhuman and depraved wretch which he is said to be. Aversion to his features, and impatience of his tyranny, may have existed; but were these the only motives to object to marriage and to abandon her country? Might not her abhorrence of Belgrave partly have arisen from an unauthorised attachment to another? Might not his cruelty partly proceed from reasonable jealousy? And might not that attachment have been one of the inducements to elopement?"

These insinuations startled me. I had no time to weigh their truth. Their

being admitted by one of my cousin's candour and discernment, entitled them to some regard from me. I besought her to be more explicit. Were these her suspicions? On what grounds were they built?

"You know that she has friends and associates in this country. You know that there are many who have constant intercourse with Dublin. Have you made inquiries among these respecting your friend? Possibly some one might be able to corroborate or confute her story."

I confessed that I had made use of no such expedients.

"But ought they not to have been used? Would they not have naturally occurred to a cautious temper?"

I answered, that my recent arrival in the city, hindered me from forming acquaintances with many persons; that, however strong my doubts might have been, I was wholly at a loss to whom to apply for this end.

“ Say rather, my friend, that your devotion to this girl absorbed every thought, and all that time which might have been employed in enlarging the number of your friends, and in supplying you with materials of observation and reflection. You were a stranger to suspicion, and, therefore, reflected not that Mrs. Keith had been much known and respected in this city; that persons existed who had been serviceable to her in the management and disposal of her property; that her will, by which she made this girl her successor, must have had executors, and witnesses, who, probably, knew the character and condition of Miss Neville, and to whom one like you might easily have found access. Ought not your caution to have suggested these expedients?”

I could not but acknowledge it.

“ And these expedients which you ought to have pursued, would naturally be pursued by those who love you. Would they not?”

“And have they been pursued?”

“Sidney has obtained, from authentic sources, some information respecting this woman, which has just been communicated to me.”

I was anxious to receive this information. I entreated her not to withhold from me what she had heard.

“Alas! my friend, this woman, thus amiable, thus studious, thus unfortunate, is — a profligate. Her husband had some reason for his persecution. His character is wholly opposite to that which she has described. His reputation has fewer blemishes than are incident to most men of the same riches and rank. Before marriage, she bestowed her heart and her person upon a young man, insinuating and elegant, but, unprincipled and dishonest. He was her father’s clerk. Her attachment to this youth was shameless, and overstepped all bounds of decorum. It has, indeed, been proved, that the first overtures to an illicit intercourse came

from her. This intercourse continued after marriage, and she, finally, to secure his company, eloped with him.

“These truths are notorious in her native city, and have been circumstantially related to Mr. L***, whose probity you well know, in a letter from an Irish friend, whose integrity and means of knowing the truth, are unquestionable. Mr. L***’s modes of thinking are singular. He had much respect for Mr. Keith and his widow, and is named trustee in the will of the latter. During her abode here, the young lady’s conduct has been free from reproach. She has shunned almost all intercourse with the world, since the decease of her aunt, probably from a consciousness of her guilt, and of the danger of detection. Mr. L*** has disclosed his knowledge to no one, but has kept a vigilant eye over her. He is unwilling to destroy her reputation, as long as she acts with circumspection.

“ You know Mr. L***’s friendship for Sidney. A meeting took place between them a few days ago. Clelia was mentioned by the former, and the assiduity of your visits ; some connection being known to subsist between Sidney and you was likewise mentioned. Sidney was desired to exert his influence to induce you to break off so dangerous an intercourse. For some time the true character of Miss Neville was concealed, notwithstanding Sidney’s endeavours to extort from him his knowledge ; but, at length, these facts were stated, and the letters containing them were shown, on condition that the discreetest and most sparing use should be made of them. They were communicated to me, that I might guard you against consequences so much to be dreaded from the uncommon fascinations of this woman.

“ How very slender must be those talents which will not enable their possessor to frame a plausible tale ; and how

easily may looks of innocence and candour be assumed by a guilty heart!

“This woman is eminently lovely: her attractions and accomplishments are dazzling, but she is sensual and fickle. No doubt she is susceptible of gratitude. No doubt your mind and person have enchanted her. She loves you as one like her is capable of loving, with impetuosity. Marriage is no bar and no requisite to the gratification of her passion, and her deportment to you has hitherto been such as no heart of true delicacy and chastity would ever have adopted. It! has been skilfully adapted to your constitution and temper, and, if you do not instantly change your course, will lead you to ruin. I shudder to think how near you have already been to the verge of guilt. That you have not fallen, was owing not to her virtue, but to yours.

“She has artfully spread her wiles for you. She has chosen scenes and hours for your intercourse, most favourable to

the oblivion of conscience and foresight. The songs which she adapts, according to your own account, to her magic instrument, tend to move the soul to love, and inculcate contempt of the future, and forgetfulness of virtuous restraints. Thank Heaven! in spite of her enchantments, your integrity is yet safe. Are you not, at length, convinced of your past danger, and determined to exercise more caution for the future?"

What could I say? These tidings sunk me into grief. The evidence thus produced, appeared to me incontestible. Clelia then was an adulteress, and a profligate? With such an one, it was impossible to hold converse. That love, to which I confided my hopes of happiness, could never lodge in the bosom of a sensualist and hypocrite. Her passion for me might lead to extravagance and phrenzy; but without the ornament of chastity, or a basis in integrity, it was to be shunned and abhorred.

My courage wholly deserted me. I melted into tears. I became, to my cousin, an object of commiseration. I became flexible and pliant to all her wishes, and readily consented to avoid this unfortunate girl in future.

My grief at this discovery, after the first burst of conviction was past, and when solitude afforded me leisure to think, led me to investigate Sidney's evidence more closely. I said: Is it right thus hastily to condemn a being, whose situation necessarily exposes her to calumny and misapprehension? Am I sure that the whole is not a wicked artifice of Sidney's, to thwart my projects of happiness? That L*** has not invented this tale to blast the character of Clelia? That L***'s correspondent has not been a deceiver, or been himself misled?

She has given me proofs of tenderness; but, admitting them to be incautious, they are not, in themselves, criminal, and may surely be excused by her youth,

her ardent feelings, and her confidence in me. Where is this lover with whom she is said to have eloped? Her conduct, since her coming hither, has been allowed to be proper, and what human creature may not repent of his misdeeds, and grow wiser by experience? What should hinder but that her past errors are now regarded with detestation and remorse? That she has admitted a pure love into her heart, and will henceforth conform to its dictates? It was not I that, in spite of her concealment, detected her marriage. She spontaneously disclosed it. To this hour it might have been a secret, for she is not aware that her true situation is known to any one on this side of the ocean.

“She had dwelt with the most picturesque, and, apparently, the most ingenuous minuteness on the incidents of her life, and especially those subsequent to marriage with Belgrave. She had related all the steps taken to effect her escape;

all the events of the voyage ; the name, character, and situation of the captain. Had she been accompanied by a lover, this narrative was vitiated not merely by omissions, but by falsehoods. All the difficulties and distresses which she painted, necessarily implied the want of a friend or protector. Was it possible that nothing in her tones and looks, nothing in a story so abundant in particulars, would have betrayed her falsehood ? By affording me the means of inquiring of the captain, and her fellow passengers, one of whom was a resident in this city, did she not afford sufficient proof of her sincerity ?

And what if she be calumniated ? If Belgrave, by inhuman falsehoods, has blasted her good name, and thus perpetuated the mischiefs, which his vengeance had already inflicted, and from which, flight into another world has not been able to screen her ; his enmity to her, and even his regard for himself,

would naturally lead him to employ this engine to ruin her. Hypocrisy and artifice are easy, and she who might counterwork or unmask the betrayer, was unconscious of his machinations. She lived in the vain security that her name and her existence were forgotten, and that her reputation, at least, among the beings who surrounded her, was free from stain.

No, I will not desert her. I will not
✓ hastily believe her wicked, and will spare no pains to ascertain the truth. I will go to Sidney. I will make him introduce me to his friend. I will see this letter with my own eyes. I will scrupulously weigh its claims to belief. I will make inquiries of others, and even of herself. I will charge her with imposture in terms so direct, and with a watchfulness so close, that the truth shall not escape me.

With these sentiments I returned to the city, and hastened to Sidney's lodgings. He received me with that placid brow,

and cordial familiarity which always distinguished him. Cursory topics were quickly dismissed, and I called his attention to my cousin and Miss Neville. I related what had just been told me, and required him to deny or confirm it.

“Your cousin has faithfully repeated my intelligence. All that is true.”

“All that,” I quickly replied, “is false. There is some deception, some stratagem to ruin this unhappy woman, and to ruin me.”

He lifted his eyes, but looked forward with undiminished benignity, and spoke mildly — “Would you say that I have invented that tale?”

“Forgive me. That insinuation was rash.”

“Nay,” said he, “it was suitable and proper. You ought to listen to such tales with reluctance, and not admit them on slight evidence. I ask you not to credit me on my assertion. Nothing should content you but the sight of the letter,

which I will procure for you, and, so far from wishing you to believe before you see it, I exhort you to suspend your belief. Meanwhile, here is a copy, which you may peruse, and may compare with the original."

I took the paper and read it. It contained all that my cousin had reported. Sidney's character; the absence of all motives to deceit, on this occasion, since his interest as the lover of Louisa, and as my competitor, would necessarily induce him to favour, rather than to counteract, my pursuit of another, showed me the folly of casting suspicions upon him. There could not be a doubt that this letter, at least, was genuine. I laid down the paper and was silent.

"Perhaps," said Sidney, "your knowledge of this woman has supplied you with proof of the falsehood of this story. Perhaps you have indubitable evidence that she is not a wife? That she did not quit Ireland clandestinely?"

"Both these, said I, mournfully, are true."

"Indeed! How did that appear?"

"By her own confession."

"What then are the facts which she denies, or which you disbelieve?"

"She fled, but her fidelity to her husband has been inviolate. She fled, not to enjoy the company of a seducer, but to shun the cruelty of a tyrant."

Sidney shook his head, in token of incredulity; but, for a short interval, said nothing. At length he resumed:

"Nothing is more frequent than calumny. Nothing is more easy than to belie the actions and motives of a human being. Appearances against this woman are strong. Yet her innocence is not impossible. For her own sake, as well as for yours, I have resolved to ascertain the truth. She ought not to be kept in ignorance of what is believed respecting her. She ought, at least, to have an opportunity of avowing her integrity.

After reading this letter, in the hands of Mr. L***, I determined to visit her, and lay before her the contents."

"I started. And did you go? Did you tell her this?"

My perturbations attracted his notice. They partly arose from surprise, at the abrupt mention of a project so singular and unexpected, and partly from inexplicable fears lest he might prejudice her mind against me.

"Be not alarmed," he replied, "I did not go. There was no need to go. My uncertainty was removed by different means."

"Are you then convinced of her innocence?"

"No. The proofs which I allude to had an opposite tendency. They convince me of her guilt."

My heart drooped at these unwelcome sounds. I had scarcely courage enough to inquire into the nature of these proofs.

"They inform me that the paramour,

with whom Clelia dishonoured herself before marriage, and whom the claims of a husband could not prevail on her to discard, is now in this city. That their illicit intercourse is still continued, her nights being spent in his company."

Horror at this news was quickly lessened by incredulity. I remembered that four evenings in the week were spent with me. That I went to her early, and left her late. The existence of a rival was impossible, for what motive could induce her to bestow tenderness and confidence on me. To suppose her affections thus equally divided; thus daily changeable; to suppose her, with regard to me, a dissembler, was, to the last degree, absurd! Why should she devote her time to any other besides him who possessed her affections? Why solicit and encourage visits, when those visits would merely interfere with, and tend to the detection of her intercourse with one whose society must be infinitely

preferred. I saw her not at stated hours, or concerted intervals. Half the evenings of the week were devoted to her, but they were not pre-appointed. My approach was hailed with delight, and my departure witnessed with reluctance. No; this was a manifest calumny. I did not disclose all my reasons for denying my faith to this story, but I did not conceal my disbelief, and inquired what were the proofs.

“My evidence I cannot produce. The information was given on condition that the authors should be concealed. I promised concealment more readily, because, if the intelligence were true, its truth might easily be ascertained. I, for my part, entertain no doubts. The evidence was such as not to be resisted: I am convinced of her depravity. Without this evidence, I neither desire, nor expect you to believe it, but it must always be in your power to ascertain its truth by other means.”

“Be good enough to tell me how.”

“The path is obvious. By charging her directly with this misconduct, she will hardly fail of tacitly confirming it. Besides, you know whether she has any acknowledged visitants besides yourself.”

“She has none ; none, at least, but of her own sex.”

“If she denies herself to him, in the presence of another, she must often deny herself to you. So much of her time must be shared with him, that your visits must be very unfrequent not to interfere with his.”

“My visits, said I, are not unfrequent, and they take place at seasons utterly inconsistent with the existence of such a connection.”

“Indeed !” exclaimed Sidney, in a tone of surprise and disapprobation, “it grieves me to hear that. If this woman be criminal, it matters little whether it be with you or with another.”

I was disconcerted and abashed at the inference thus drawn from my words. The inference was false, but such as a mind fastidious in its maxims of decorum, might easily draw from the frequency, the loneliness, and protraction of our interviews. I was unwilling to state the truth, in this respect, for fear of creating one suspicion; by the means employed for removing another. Meanwhile anxiety was strongly painted in my friend's looks. He resumed :

“ Your visits must, indeed, be frequent and unseasonable if they interfere with his. Such intercourse loves to hide itself beneath the veil of darkness. It is awake and active when the rest of the world are asleep. Sufficient caution is, indeed, employed to prevent intrusion in the present instance. Should you call at the hours devoted to him, you would be turned away with ‘she is indisposed;’ ‘she is not at home;’ ‘she is engaged.’

Doors and windows are closed and fastened, and the porter is commissioned to exclude every comer."

"And pray, you, what are those seasons?"

"They begin at eight or nine, and end—before morning."

My heart now misgave me. Such were the periods of my own visits, but I saw her only thrice or four times in the week. The intervals, indeed, were regular, though that regularity had been accidental. Could those nights when I was absent be thus devoted? And what were my claims? I was no more than her friend. My pretensions interfere not with those of such a one as this. To me she gave her confidence and esteem, on another she bestowed her love.

"How often," said I, "does this intercourse take place?"

"Not every night, but thrice a week at least."

This tended to confirm my fears. In-

dignation began to rise with my grief. "I will burst upon her," said I, "when she expects me not. I will detect her in the very arms of her seducer. This will be ample proof, and this proof is in my power."

Sidney marked the disquietude which these thoughts produced. He regarded me with looks of compassion. "Come," said he, cheerily, "things shall all be set right. You and I, Felix, shall know each other better. Your cousin shall join us in a scheme from which we will contrive to extract pleasure as well as benefit. If you will spend this evening with me, I will disclose my plan."

"I am in no mood," said I, "to adopt new schemes. This unhappy mystery must be cleared up before I can take repose."

"Whence does this interest in a stranger arise?" said he. "Is it a disinterested zeal for the honour of a female, who, in consequence of being a wife, is culpable

for maintaining intimacy with any one but her husband? But this mystery is easily removed. It might have been removed last evening."

"How?"

"If, instead of pushing pieces of wood over a chequered table, you had applied at her door for admission——."

"What then?"

"You would have been dismissed with a false or evasive answer."

"Last evening? Was this profligate in her company last evening? For how long?"

"From ten o'clock till one at least."

These few words instantly revived my fainting hopes. Evidence of the treachery employed against my friend could not be stronger than this. These hours were spent in my company. The grossness of the calumny was therefore apparent. My features brightened with confidence and exultation. "Your informer has assured you of this? Or is it a con-

jecture? Is it built upon the same authority with the rest of the story you have told?"

"I have no better evidence for any thing respecting this woman."

"Then you are deceived," cried I, vehemently. "Your informer is a lying and perfidious wretch. It is some wicked agent of her tyrant, who has endeavoured to abuse your ears, and to blast the reputation of an helpless and unfortunate woman."

He still preserved an air of doubt and anxiety. "I fear that you pronounce too hastily," said he.

"No. The falsehood of this assertion, at least, I have the means of discovering incontestibly."

"What means?"

"Such as are more to be relied on than vague and anonymous insinuations. Nothing less than the testimony of my own senses."

He looked at me with new disquietude.

"You talk in riddles. How could the testimony of your senses inform you in what manner, and with whom, this woman spent the last evening?"

"Because I was neither blind nor deaf; because, at the very time you mention, from ten o'clock till one, at night, I was her companion. There was not an interval of ten seconds in which I did not see or hear her."

"You mistake me," said he, "I speak of *last* evening; of Saturday evening."

"Certainly," returned I, "and I rejoice that you do, otherwise I might have wanted such unerring proofs of the falsehood of the tale."

He rose from his seat, and fixing more steadfast looks upon me, repeated, "last evening, you tell me, was wholly spent by you with this woman."

"It was."

"He now turned away from me, and walked to fro, with a troubled face. I

imagined that I understood these tokens. He inferred an improper intercourse, from an interview thus unseasonable. I was embarrassed in my turn. I was fearful of this inference, and therefore confessed thus much, with some faltering and reluctance, which inevitably tended to confirm his suspicions. Still the strongest emotion in my heart was delight, in discovering the falsehood of the charges made against Miss Neville.

“Felix,” said Sidney, solemnly, and with a deep sigh, “I love you much. I think upon the danger which besets you, with pain arising not only from the love that I bear you, but from my affection for your cousin, whose happiness is interwoven with yours. Till this moment I was not aware of all your danger; of the frailty, the fickleness, the pliancy of your mind.” There he stopped.

“Your fears,” said I, “on my account, are generous, but groundless. This

woman is nothing to me, but a friend, from whose society I collect greater pleasure and instruction than any other source will supply. She is a sufferer whom it is my duty to cherish. She has been maligned and persecuted; and while I am convinced of the iniquity with which she has been treated, ought I to act as if my convictions were opposite? Ought I to shun the society of one whom I know to be innocent and excellent, or refuse her conversation and her confidence, on terms consistent with every duty?"

He seemed to pay little regard to these words, but, advancing towards me, with new solemnity, said: "let me again ask you; let me conjure you to tell me the truth. How, and where did you spend last evening?"

"Innocently, as I hope for mercy from a righteous and omniscient judge. I spent it innocently. Nothing passed be-

tween us : nothing has ever passed between us, inconsistent with her obligations as the wife of another ; nothing but what a sister might laudably bestow."

"But how, and where was it spent? In the presence of the same righteous judge, tell me how, and where was it spent?"

"I have already told you. It was in my own lodgings till nine o'clock ; from that hour till one in the morning, in the house, and by the side of Clelia."

Surprise, indignation, and grief were mingled in the features of Sidney. He could with difficulty articulate, "Is it possible? So young, trained up in habits of sincerity and purity, and yet capable—under a tremendous sanction—thus deliberately capable! Felix, I dismiss my hopes of you. This instance of depravity and falsehood exceeds what my worst fears had painted."

"Falsehood! Depravity! What words

are these? How have I deserved the charge?"

"Enough. Nothing need be said, unless it be to retract a falsehood so hateful! so audacious!——."

My blood began to boil.—"I have nothing to retract. I can only aver my truth and my innocence. If surmises and rumours, or fallacious inferences, are of more weight than my solemn declarations, I have, indeed, fallen low in your esteem. I disdain to expostulate with you. I shall make no efforts to retrieve your good opinion. If it can thus easily be lost, to regain it is impossible, and when gained, it is worthless."

What followed, tended only mutually to exasperate. We parted in anger.

My mind was full of vexation and uneasiness. I was oppressed with the proofs of Sidney's general integrity; persuaded of my own innocence; wounded by the charge of having basely lied, though con-

scious that the charge was unmerited; alternately consoled by the approbation of my own conscience, and afflicted by perceiving that I had lost the esteem of one whose discernment and integrity I had been accustomed to revere; and dubious of the grounds on which I stood, I was fearful that the evidence, which swayed his belief was, in itself, sufficiently plausible and intricate to govern a dispassionate observer; fearful that the same evidence, and even the mere authority of Sidney, would undermine my reputation in the hearts of others; of the Wallaces; of my cousin; of my mother.

For the present, I felt no inclination to visit Clelia. . . I wanted some one in whose ear I might pour my whole soul; in whose bosom I might disburthen my heart of its vexations. No one was more entitled to this confidence than my cousin, and to her I accordingly on the next morning repaired.

She received me without her usual smiles of affability. She had been weeping. She acceded to my wishes to walk in the garden, with half disguised reluctance. When alone together, she seemed disinclined to speak. I was chilled with a thousand different apprehensions. I already perceived that her mind was poisoned by what I deemed the artifices or malignities of Sidney. My courage forsook me at the thoughts of contending with an adversary so formidable.

At length I broke silence, and complained of her reserve.

"My reserve," she answered, "flows from my sorrow. What can I say to you? It is not my province to rebuke, or to censure you. Perhaps, if I once had acted differently, things would not have been thus. I acted, as I thought, for the best, but you will be of a different opinion. Your vices and your miseries you will not scruple to lay at the door of my pride

and obstinacy. And how shall I repel the charge?"

"Do you then believe me to be vicious?"

"I cannot but believe it."

"Good Heaven! What is the ground of your belief? You will not surely condemn me unheard?"

"I have no doubts."

"No doubt of my depravity?"

"Alas! none."

"Let me then take away from your sight, a wretch who is not even worthy to be heard in his own defence."

She wept and sobbed. "Go, my once loved brother, the joy of my heart, leave me; your presence is a source of pain too exquisite to be borne. Go, and may your eyes be opened to the ruin which lies in your path soon enough to shun it!"

"And is it come to this? Shall I not, at least, know my crime?"

"Your crime cannot but be known to

you. Would you have me blast my own ears by repeating it? To connect with the name of Felix Calvert the odious appellations of villain! liar! 'Tis too much! I beseech you leave me! never see me more!——."

"This," said I, "is the fatal treachery of Sidney. It is he who has shut your ears against the claims of justice."

"Speak not of Sidney thus. You misapprehend, you know him not. Would to heaven there were more affinity between you; that a portion of his noble and enlightened spirit had fallen on my brother. But to hope is vain! Such felicity is not reserved for the lost Louisa!"

"And is the word of Sidney to condemn me to infamy and exile? As a human creature, is it impossible for him to fail in knowledge, or in virtue? May not some unhappy error have misled him?"

“No : there is no alternative. Either you or he is a perjured villain. Can I believe that Sidney hates my brother ; that he deliberately utters abhorred falsehoods ? That I must believe, or suppose you to be guilty of the like. I cannot hesitate which to choose, which to condemn.” Her grief was now mingled with impatience. She continued, “I will not hear you. I will not see you more. If you continue here, my heart will burst. Go, ill-starred youth ! Go ; the sight of thee reminds me of thy mother, and I cannot bear to think——.”

My thoughts insensibly acquired firmness and consistency. Of those atrocious charges I was innocent. I knew not what these charges were. I cared not to know. If I were not worthy to be heard, to be informed of my offences, I would trample in my turn, on such injustice ; I would leave my vindication

to time, to chance. It was enough that my own heart acquitted me of guilt.

After incoherently muttering these ideas, I left the garden, and the house, and once more set my horse's head towards the city.

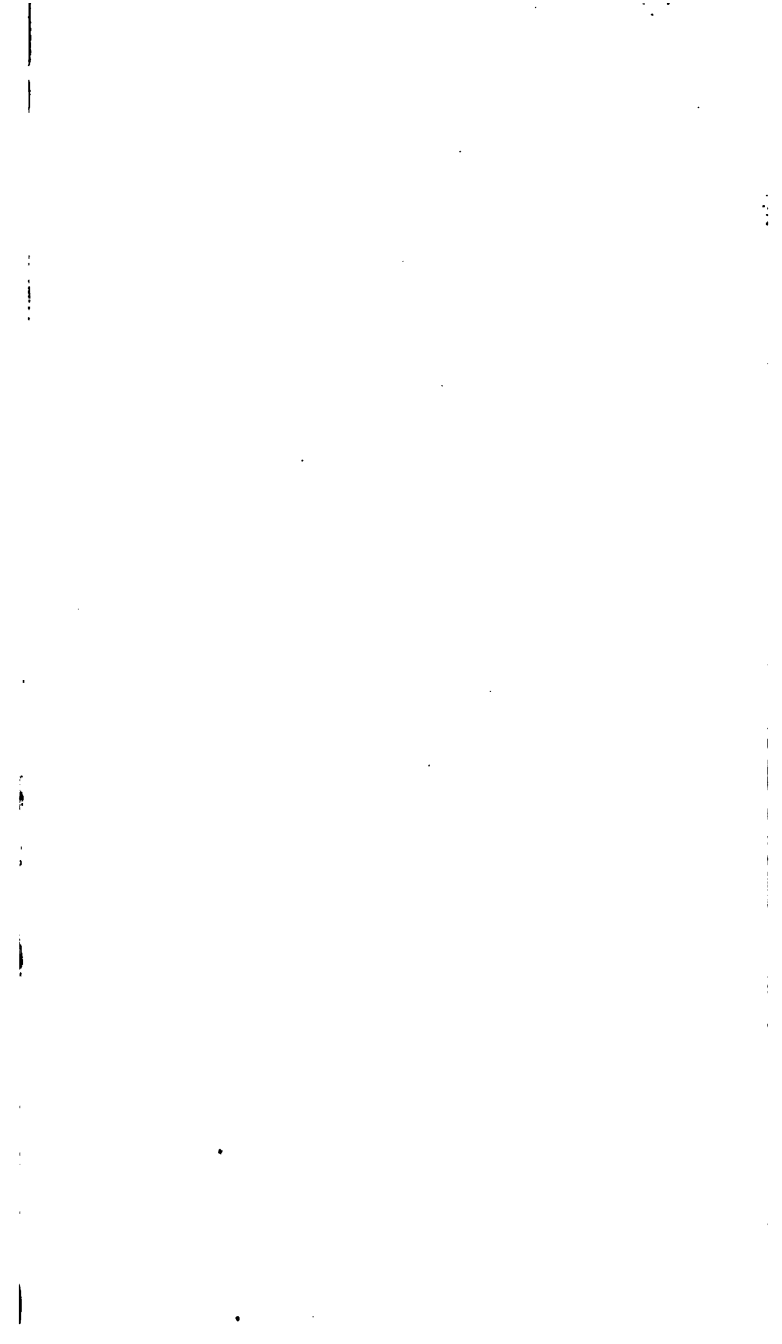
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